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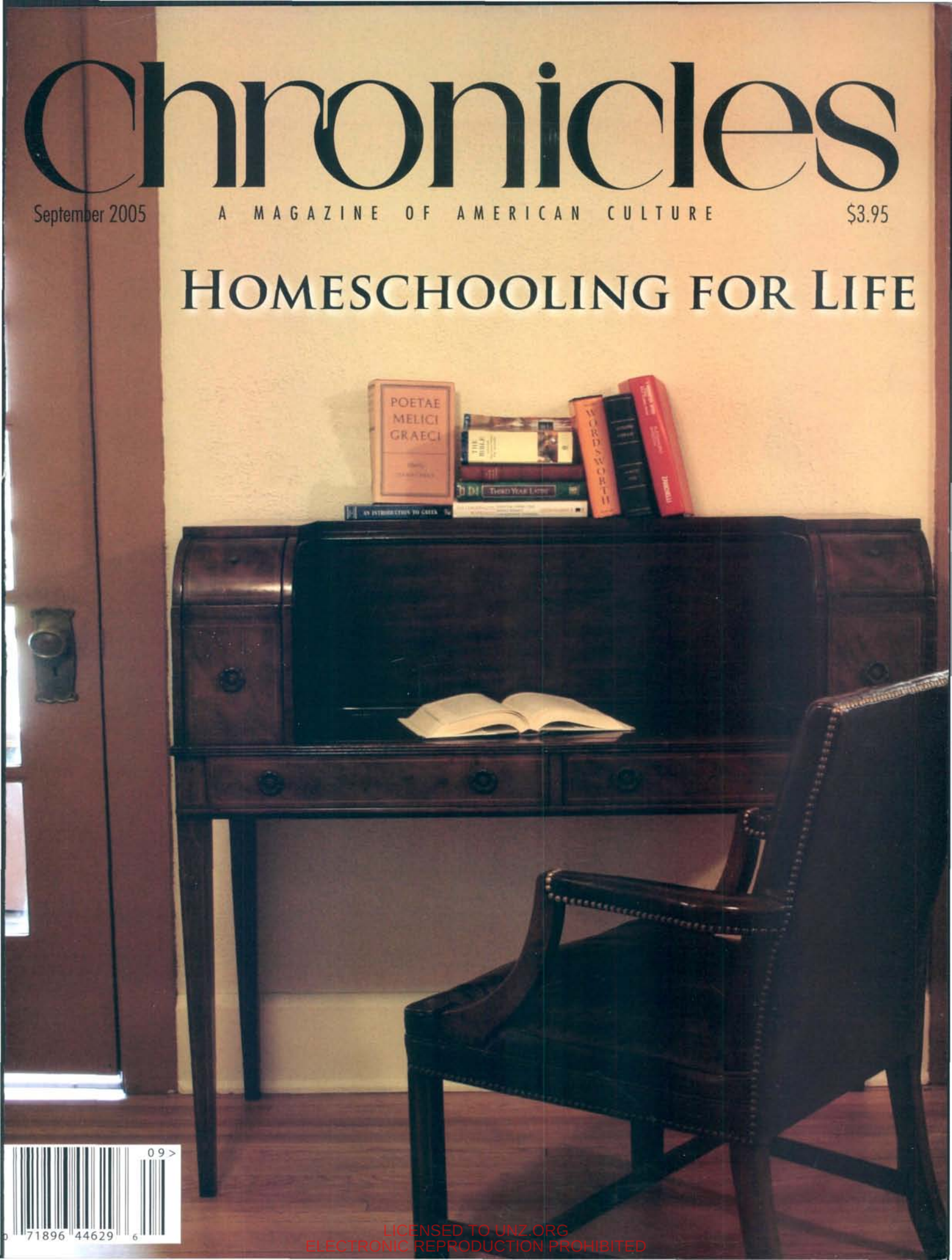

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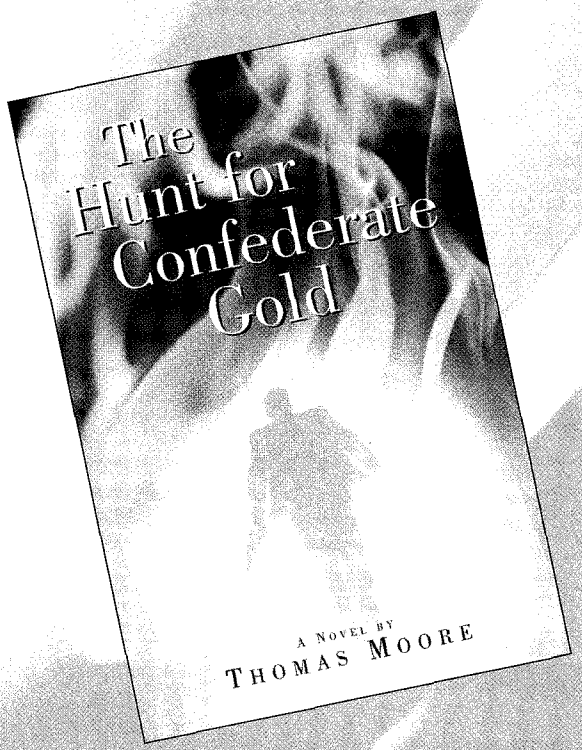

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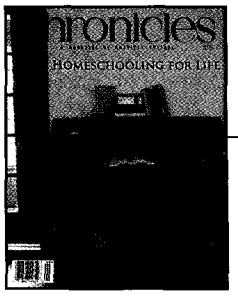

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Men of the East

I am perplexed by Aaron D. Wolf's omission of any reference at all to the Eastern Orthodox Church in "Effeminate Gospel, Effeminate Christians" (Views, July), particularly since he is identified as a Church (capital C) historian. Coincidentally, the same issue contains Scott P. Richert's article about the consecration of an Orthodox monastery in Montenegro, which was attended by several *Chronicles* editors and contributors ("A Timeless Moment," *The Rockford Files*). The *Chronicles* contingent would have observed none but male leadership in the church in Montenegro, and I am happy to report that the situation in this country is the same.

The number of Orthodox Christians in the United States is increasing steadily, and the nonnegotiability of the Orthodox position on heterosexual male-only ordination is a huge reason, particularly among disaffected mainline adherents. Thirteen years ago, my husband and I, cradle Southern Baptists (not a mainline denomination but one just as prone to "feminized" worship), said farewell to that organization and to the typical church we attended. The good old hymns, including "In the Garden," would have only improved the worship service there, dominated as it was by praise choruses and soft-rock solos by swooning women. The interminable altar call had become an extended opportunity for worshipers (usually women) to "hug the preacher's neck" and tearfully request baptism for the second or even third time, just to "make sure." My opinion is that the uncertainty of many Protestant evangelicals (women and children, in particular) about whether they are really saved is because of the absence of "manly" sacramental worship, which has been replaced by "girly" heart- and spirit-centered worship.

As for homosexual clergy, marriage, *etc.*, many of us new Orthodox converts are still smiling about the story of what happened two years ago in Russia after a "gay wedding" in the Mother of God Chapel in Nizhny Novgorod. First, the bishops defrocked the priest. Then, the church was bulldozed. Finally, the rubble was burned. A news story commented at the time: "They call it the Orthodox Church for a reason." Thank God that this ancient Church not only endures in the old countries but is growing in the new world as well.

—*Mary Alice Cook*
Eagle Ridge, AK

On a Supreme Court Appointment

Chronicles carries informed and very interesting articles. You have literate and intelligent authors, and I look forward anxiously to the arrival of each issue. I want to compliment you particularly on the article on the judiciary by William F. Harvey ("An Appointment to the Supreme Court," *Vital Signs*, June). It is a tragedy that Judge Danaher was not placed on the Supreme Court instead of Brennan, who gleefully participated in the destruction of constitutional government in this country. It is refreshing to know that individuals such as Dr. Harvey clearly see the source from which many of our current problems derive. Thank you for carrying such material.

—*Edward B. McLean*
Crawfordsville, IN

On Rockford's Dawn

Conservatives who hope and pray incessantly for real political reform in America can take great delight in independent candidate Larry Morrissey's election to the Rockford, Illinois, mayor's office ("It's Morning Again in Rockford," *The Rockford Files*, June). While Scott P. Richert didn't elaborate on Mr. Morrissey's politics, just the fact that he ran his own campaign and beat the Republicrats in Illinois' second-largest city proves that the corrupt two-party establishment can be beaten.

I wish all in Rockford the best, and congratulations. It is morning again. God willing, what happened in Rockford last Election Day will happen all across America, come election time; that day is long overdue.

—*Kenneth Reynolds*
The Bronx, NY

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by Thomas Pauken

Karl Rove and the Plame Affair

Karl Rove's favorite president is Richard Nixon. What a twist of fate it would be if Rove were driven from power as Nixon was over what both men would consider trivial matters—the leaking of a CIA employee's name to reporters by Rove in 2004 and the Watergate break-in of the Democratic headquarters at the instigation of Nixon campaign officials in 1972. Just as it was not the Watergate break-in *per se* (but the subsequent cover-up) that brought Nixon down, so it may be that what Karl Rove said and did after the fact will prove his undoing.

At the center of the controversy is an obscure and very restrictive 1982 federal statute designed to protect American spies. The legislation is known as the "Philip Agee" law and was put in place to discourage people such as Agee (a disaffected leftist who had been in the CIA) from "outing" covert CIA operatives stationed abroad. Valerie Plame appears to have fallen under this category of protected names since she had worked undercover for the agency in her overseas posts. The obstacle to getting a conviction against Rove for leaking her identity to reporters is that he would have had to have known that she was an undercover operative and also known that it was against the law to reveal her identity. It is doubtful that Rove had such knowledge. This is not (as it was with Agee) a situation where you have a disgruntled activist exposing our spies in order to disrupt CIA covert operations and put the life of an agent at risk. This was simply Karl Rove doing what he does best—employing a scorched-earth policy against anyone whom he views as an enemy of the Bush administration. And Valerie Plame happened to be "fair game," in Rove's words, because she is the wife of Amb. Joseph Wilson, a man who had challenged the intelligence findings that the Bush administration had used to justify its preemptive war against Iraq.

Besides, Rove had gotten away with orchestrating smears throughout his political career, dating back to his days as a College Republican operative in the Nixon years. Karl Rove is a master of using the press to do his dirty work for him; he would leak sensitive information to favored reporters on a "not for attribution" basis. When the damaging information appeared in print, Rove would pile on a story that was essentially his creation in the first place. It was a formula that worked for him time and time again. This time, however, was different. Valerie Plame had been under "deep cover," and the CIA demanded that the Justice Department investigate the leak. To his credit, Attorney General John Ashcroft recused himself from the case, and his deputy selected U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald from Chicago to be the special prosecutor. Fitzgerald had previously taken on Islamic terrorists, Mafia chieftains, and corrupt politicians with notable success. How could Rove possibly have guessed that the case would take on such importance that the judge would require key reporters to reveal their sources, thus outing Lewis "Scooter" Libby and Rove? What Rove also did not realize was that he had put himself in the middle of a foreign-policy fight between neoconservative advocates of the war in Iraq and critics such as Wilson who were accusing the administration of "cooking the books" and "manipulating intelligence."

Rove is such a political lightning rod that most of the focus has been on him. Very little attention has been given to the other name mentioned as a source for stories by syndicated columnist Robert Novak and *Time* magazine correspondent Matthew Cooper. "Scooter" Libby is Dick Cheney's chief of staff and national-security advisor. While Karl Rove may call the shots when it comes to President Bush's domestic agenda, Vice President Cheney is king when it comes to foreign policy. Paul Wolfowitz may have been the architect of the war in Iraq, but Dick Cheney made the call to go forward and persuaded the President to give his approval.

What happens if it turns out that the Bush administration relied on fabricated information about "weapons of mass destruction" (WMDs) to persuade Congress and the American people that we had to go to war against Iraq? Ambassador Wilson had debunked the administration's claim that Saddam Hussein was attempting to acquire a form of uranium from Niger to make WMDs. Wilson had to be discredited because, if the Niger information were false, it cast doubt upon many of the other intelligence claims made by neocons. If special prosecutor Fitzgerald is going down this road, certain prominent figures could be indicted for obstruction of justice and/or for lying about classified national-security matters to Congress and the American people. Perhaps that is why leading neoconservative spokesman Bill Kristol said that Fitzgerald "is the problem for the White House; we have no idea what he knows . . ."

The worst possible scenario for the administration would be if it turns out that the Niger documents in question (which all now agree were forged) were fabricated by individuals who may have had a motive for getting us into the war. As this article goes to press, shadowy figures previously linked to the Iran-Contra scandal have been mentioned as possible originators of the forged documents. If there is any truth to these charges, the lid will blow off Washington—and the Bush administration will be history.

Richard Nixon must have spent much of his life after the presidency wondering what went wrong—why such an insignificant matter in the grand scheme of things ended his career. I suspect he never fully appreciated how the cultivation of an environment in which the ends justifies the means infected those associated with his administration. In my judgment, George W. Bush's White House has much more in common with the Nixon administration than with his father's. The same mind-set of the end justifying the means is at work here, and it may have caught up with Rove and others in the Plame Affair.

The usual sycophants are beating the drums in defense of Karl Rove, trying to make the case that conservatives have a stake in keeping Rove in power. But the party line may not save Rove's job this time. In his eagerness to hunt down a perceived enemy, Karl Rove stumbled into a national-security briar patch that may bring the entire neocon cabal down with him.

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JUDGE JOHN ROBERTS of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, whom President George W. Bush has nominated to take the place of retiring Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, is what we used to call a "lawyer's lawyer." He comes from Harvard College, Harvard Law School, the *Harvard Law Review*, a clerkship for one of the most brilliant federal court of appeals judges, Henry Friendly, and a clerkship on the U.S. Supreme Court with then-Associate Justice William Rehnquist. While in practice with the "white shoe" Washington firm of Hogan and Hartson, Roberts was one of the most prominent barristers before the U.S. Supreme Court and was said to be so good that current clerks would abandon their memo writing just to hear him.

Those who knew Roberts when young, those who went to law school with him, and those who practiced with him all seem to agree that this is a person of truly exceptional talent, yet one of much humility. This is a combination almost unknown in Washington, and, while his nomination was quickly savaged by such left-wing groups as People for the American Way and *MoveOn.org* (who feared he might vote to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*), Democrat senators, once they got to meet the man, were remarkably kind to him. Sen. Charles Schumer of New York, who has done more than anyone to politicize judicial confirmations, noted that Roberts grew up in Buffalo and was, like Schumer, a Bulls fan. Schumer's judiciary committee colleague Richard Durbin (D-IL), normally not-much-less-savage than Schumer, praised Roberts because he, like Durbin, "hated bullies." Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA), former scourge of Robert Bork, huffed and puffed and, like his fellow Massachusetts solon John Kerry, said that Roberts would still have to satisfy the Democrats that he would not turn the Court in dangerous directions.

Unfortunately for the Democrats, however, their last two successful Supreme Court nominations, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer, stoutly maintained at their confirmation hearings that it would be inappropriate to predict how they might rule as justices, and there is no reason why Roberts is not going to be able to follow their example. The question on the mind of conservatives is whether Roberts, who had a very thin record as an appellate judge (he was only on the bench for two years) will be another "stealth nominee," like David Souter, and whether he will veer to the left if appointed. He had, after all, in his confirmation hearings for the Court of Appeals, indicated that he had no problem upholding *Roe* v. *Wade*, which he described as the settled law of the land.

Still, those on the Supreme Court are not bound by previous precedent, and abortion foes have been cheered by the fact that, as a government attorney, Roberts had signed a brief (correctly) suggesting that there is no proper constitutional basis for *Roe* and that it ought to be overturned. Most remarkably, Roberts had actually maintained in the 2003 confirmation hearings that he believed it to be the job of a judge to follow the will of the people as expressed in the Constitution and laws, and not to legislate. If he is true to his word, then President Bush will have carried out his campaign promise to bring the Court back to the point where the Framers wanted it. O'Connor was a "swing" justice, and Roberts, taking her place, just might move us back toward a government of laws not men.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

PRESIDENT BUSH's nomination of Judge John Roberts to the U.S. Supreme Court has caused something just a little short of panic on the left. The day after the announcement, the *New York Times* told its readers that Roberts and his wife, Jane Sullivan Roberts, are "devout Catholics." The following day, a front-page headline proclaimed that Roberts' life is "rooted" in "faith," and *Times* readers later learned that the Robertses had "joined a church in Bethesda to follow their priest, Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi, who was well known in the Washington area as an advocate of Catholic orthodoxy and an opponent of abortion." More intrepid reporting in the *Times* revealed that Roberts is a Republican and also a man, a fact that caused Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to express disappointment that her proposed successor would not also be the beneficiary of affirmative action.

Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* devoted its energies to trying to determine whether Roberts had ever been a member of the Federalist Society, a subject the *Post* found far more interesting than the communist affiliations of officials in those presidential administrations of which it approved. At the time of this writing, what the *Post* had determined was that Roberts was listed in a Federalist Society directory from 1997 to 1998, even though a White House spokesman told the *Post* that Roberts "has no recollection of ever being a member" of the society.

None of this reporting was designed to help the readers of the *Times* and the *Post* rest easy. In fact, the day after the nomination, the *Times* opined that, if Roberts "is a mainstream conservative, in the tradition of Justice O'Connor, he should be confirmed. But if on closer inspection he turns out to be an extreme ideologue with an agenda of stripping away important rights, he should not be." By "important rights," of course, the *Times* essentially means abortion, the suppression of Christianity, and "gay rights." Unfortunately, the fact that the *Times* is already worried that Roberts may be an "extreme ideologue" tells us more about how the *Times* views the tens of millions of Americans who vote Republican and go to church than it does about Roberts.

What the reporting in the *Times* and the *Post* actually shows is that very little is known about how Roberts views the most contentious legal issues of the day. Such a bland public record suggests either that Judge Roberts recognized early on that his extremely impressive legal credentials might one day propel him to the Court, and he desired to avoid the fate of Judge Bork before getting there, or that he has a cautious nature unlikely to produce change on the Court.

In the absence of a strong public record, people on all sides of the debate were reduced to reading the sort of tea leaves the *Times* and *Post* kept busy reporting. Those tea leaves could be read in various ways. In his confirmation hearing for the D.C. Circuit judgeship, Roberts told the Senate that *Roe* v. *Wade* is "more than settled" law. While working in the George H.W. Bush administration, however, Roberts signed a brief expressing that administration's view that *Roe* v. *Wade* should be overturned. In addition, his wife has served as an officer and board member of Feminists for Life, which is committed to overturning *Roe*

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v. *Wade* and providing legal protection to the unborn.

As David Kirkpatrick reported in the July 22 *New York Times*, the White House has been waging a campaign for at least a year to convince conservatives that Roberts is reliable, based on "personal testimonials about Judge Roberts, his legal work, his Roman Catholic faith, and his wife's public opposition to abortion." Kirkpatrick also broke the news that Roberts' parish priest is against abortion, which caused Austin Ruse, president of the Culture of Life Foundation, to tell Kirkpatrick, "For people like me who are reading the tea leaves, it is another marker that we can breathe easy."

The desire to read tea leaves is understandable, given the Supreme Court's transformation from the chief court of what Alexander Hamilton termed "the least dangerous branch" to what it is today: a never ending Constitutional Convention. *Pace* Mr. Ruse, however, none of us will really be able to "breathe easy" until Roberts is confirmed and actually proves that he is the sort of "extreme ideologue" the *Times* fears.

If he is, Bush will deserve immense credit for nominating the type of Supreme Court justice he promised, in addition to the credit he already deserves for ignoring the many public (and no doubt private) calls to nominate someone on the basis of race or sex. But if Roberts really is "a mainstream conservative, in the tradition of Sandra O'Connor," Bush will have demonstrated definitively that all conservatives can ever expect from the Republican Party is betrayal.

—*Tom Piatak*

AS THE U.S. SENATE prepares to consider President George W. Bush's nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court, John Roberts, there seems to be a certain ambiguity about Judge Roberts' position on *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 decision that made abortion-on-demand the "law of the land." On the one hand, he is on record as saying that *Roe* was incorrectly decided and should be changed. On the other hand, in his 2003 hearings as a nominee for his present post, he said that it is "settled law." What does he believe? And what will be his decision, if confirmed, when he has a chance to revoke or to reaffirm that fateful mandate, which makes the United States the most abortion-prone country in the world? Even the laws of communist China, where women are often compelled to abort, authorize it only during the first three months; ours permit it during the entire nine months of pregnancy. What Roberts really thinks, and how he will act, is not altogether clear. Even less clear is what President Bush thinks and will do during his second term.

It is evident that President Bush owes his reelection, and his grand margin of victory, to support he received from prolifers and advocates of traditional sexual morality. After his sweeping victory, representatives of the pro-life movements that had supported him and prayed for him tired in attempting to persuade him to say or do something that would make it evident that he really understands what America has done to herself by permitting over 40 million abortions since 1973.

Representatives of Care Net, the evangelically rooted organization that, in 2004, helped over 100,000 troubled women and girls to decide not to abort, began to ask him to take a simple action that would, first, make it very evident where he stands and, second, potentially help to change the hearts and minds of the America people, without which judicial and legislative action is hardly likely to succeed. We asked him to establish a little governmental agency to publish the statistics on abortion, listing how many occurred this past week, how many this year, how many altogether. We also recommended that this agency report the ages and marital status of the women aborting, how many were repeat abortions, and so forth. It would be useful to compare the number of people killed by terrorists on September 11, 2001 (3,000), to the number killed "safely and legally" by doctors that same day (around 4,000), and the day before, and the day after, and so on. It seemed to us that this measure would be hard to oppose.

We wrote directly to President Bush, but, knowing that it was unlikely that he would ever see our letter, we also contacted his liaison officer for faith-related issues, Timothy Goeglein, who recommend that we approach Michael Leavitt, secretary of Health and Human Services (or is that Sacrifice?), and the Surgeon General. On our own, we also approached Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-NC), whom some of us know personally, Rep. Sue Myrick (R-NC and your writer's own representative), Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN and a physician).

We received nothing from the White House, nothing from the senators, nothing from the congressman, nothing from Health and Human Services. To Secretary Leavitt, we put the following questions: "Is there any reason why we should not think that you acquiesce over one million abortions annually? Is there any reason why we should not think that the President acquiesces?" No answer. Apparently, there is no reason why we should not think so.

Before the 2004 elections, many prolife Christians, myself included, worked hard to help the President win reelection. A letter came from Senator Frist, and another from Vice President Dick Cheney. An answer? No, an invitation to a presidential dinner to honor me for my help in the election campaign. After two pages of praise and exhortation appeared the lines, "Send a check for $2,500 for a seat, or for $25,000 for a table of ten." I answered, "We don't want an honor, just an answer." No answer.

This is what the Swiss writer Eric Werner calls *la censure molle* (soft censorship)—no reply, no argument or counterproposal, nothing. This is less painful than hard censorship and thought control. We are not forced to believe that the President and his party have betrayed their professed ideals and those of us who trusted him, but we are increasingly left with no alternative but to think such. We have reminded them collectively and individually of the proverb, "Hope deferred sickens the heart" (Proverbs 13:12). Do they worry that voters who are sick at heart may never again flock to support them? Apparently not.

—*Harold O.J. Brown*

SHELBY FOOTE, R.I.P. Shelby Foote, one of the giants of Southern literature, passed away on June 27 at his home in Memphis at the age of 88. An unapologetic Mississippian, Foote never finished college but had much more valuable experiences—he grew up with another world-class Southern writer, Walker Percy, and, as a young man, played tennis on William Faulkner's court.

Foote began and ended his writing career as a novelist, but two decades of his productive middle years were spent composing the three volumes of *The Civil War: A Narrative*, on which his fame will rest.

It is a bit ironic that, in his later years, Foote achieved a measure of celebrity (with which he was reportedly uncomfortable) by his appearance on the notorious federally subsidized Ken Burns Civ-

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il War television "documentary." Foote's knowledge and charm, together with the intrinsic appeal of the real Civil War material presented, were all that redeemed Burns' slanted, self-indulgent p.c.-fest. Burns, in accord with his usual operating mode, filmed Foote for several days and then cut and pasted pieces as he pleased to fit into his preconceived script. Foote made clear later that he was not aware of Burns' interpretations when he participated in the program and that he did not share them. (The leftist African-American historian Barbara Fields once told me, in conversation on Gene and Betsey Genovese's back veranda, that she, too, felt misused by Burns' methods.)

During a lecture at the University of South Carolina at the height of the controversy over flying the Confederate Flag on the state capitol dome, Foote surprised his naively liberal audience by opining that the flag ought to be left where it was.

I cannot better say what is to be said about Foote the writer than by repeating some of what I wrote in 1980 under the title "American Iliad": "Our Civil War contains more dramatic events, unforgettable personalities, and crucial issues than any other part of the American experience. No other event in our history occurred with such vast scale and complexity and is so pregnant with import for our self-understanding as a people. It is deserving of an epic treatment, as, indeed, Walt Whitman predicted more than a century ago, it must inevitably produce. Foote's history is that epic. . . . It is said that the American Civil War has generated more printed words than any event in the history of the globe except the life and works of Christ. We have now reached the summit of this literature. *The Civil War: A Narrative* is the best work that ever has been or ever will be written about the great war. It is the place to begin and the place to end any study of America's central experience."

—*Clyde Wilson*

JAMES B. STOCKDALE, R.I.P. The death of Adm. James Stockdale on July 5 robs America of one of the best men of our time. A soldier and a patriot, Admiral Stockdale also possessed the kind of inquiring mind and thirst for virtue that is the mark of a true philosopher.

Born and raised in Illinois, Stockdale attended Monmouth College before receiving an appointment to the Naval Academy, from which he graduated in 1946. As a Navy pilot, he flew virtually every kind of airplane they had in the 1950's. Graduating from the Test Pilot School, he rose to become a squadron commander in Vietnam. Shot down in 1965 and suffering from a broken bone in his back, Stockdale was beaten mercilessly and imprisoned for seven years, four of them spent in solitary confinement, and was repeatedly tortured.

Upon his release, Stockdale received the Congressional Medal of Honor and campaigned tirelessly on behalf of POWs and their families. He served briefly as president of the Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. In solitary confinement, he had time to think about the ethics of the military profession, and the fruits of that thinking, combined with his careful reading of Stoic philosophers, resulted in several books of essays. *In Love and War*, his memoir of the Vietnam War years (cowritten with his wife, Sibyl), was widely read and turned into a creditable made-for-television film, improbably starring James Woods.

When I presumed to chaff him once about the lack of resemblance between the robust and virile Stockdale and the neurasthenic Woods, Jim told me that both he and Sibyl liked the film and thought Woods put in a splendid performance (which, in fact, he did). But that was just like Jim. He was as generous as he was skeptical and always more interested in the deeper truth than in the surface. For him, Ross Perot was not simply a funny little guy who had made big money from dubious government contracts but an American patriot willing to spend his money on expensive and fruitless efforts to recover American MIAs in Vietnam. When Perot asked to use his name, only temporarily, of course, as his vice presidential candidate, Jim naturally agreed, never expecting to find himself in a vice-presidential debate with Dan Quayle and Al Gore, neither of whom were fit to hold his bathrobe.

Jim's manifest bewilderment at the situation in which he found himself led to his famous questions, "Who am I? Why am I here?" If any of the columnists and TV commentators who poked fun at Jim had ever read a book or thought a thought in the course of their foolish lives, they would have understood the questions. How did it happen that a serious man who served his country now finds himself in the public pillory reserved for the fools who seek political power? I later told the candidate that, for all the torment the campaign must have been, it was good for the public to have had a glimpse of an American with integrity.

I got to know Jim Stockdale first through his books, which I read and reviewed. More than once, he accepted my invitation to write for *Chronicles*, and he served for several years on the board of directors of The Rockford Institute. Although we met several times and corresponded, I cannot claim to have known him well, but I did get to know him well enough to admire the clarity of his mind and the force of his character.

Although kind and diplomatic in his dealings with people, Jim was under no illusions. He could size people up from across the room and could spot a fool at 20 yards. It would be unkind of me, after his death, to repeat some of his judgments, but I vividly recall our conversations about the Citadel. Jim had wanted to hire M.E. Bradford in the English department, and, during his trip to Charleston, I had taken Mel over to the Citadel. Although some faculty members were eager to hire Bradford, others were smart enough to realize how they would suffer by comparison. This was only one of many petty failures Stockdale faced as president. He suffered his biggest defeat in trying to reform what he regarded as the unfair and inhuman hazing system. The old boys simply would not allow any changes. When I asked him why he left so abruptly, he told me: "When you've been tortured by professionals, you do not have to put up with amateurs."

Jim was very fond of Richard Nixon, because of President Nixon's respect for America's fighting men. It was Nixon's bombing in the later stages of the war, he insisted, that forced the North Vietnamese to release the POWs. He once told me that Nixon's respect for the uniform sometimes seemed excessive. Once, after a National Security meeting, the President came upon Brent Scowcroft, who had recently been promoted to general, picking up all the papers from the floor, which was the routine. Nixon scolded him, saying, "You shouldn't be doing that, General," and bent over and began scooping up the papers himself. This is a side of Nixon one rarely hears about.

Once, Jim and I were walking after lunch, on a cold and blustery day on Michigan Avenue in Chicago, when he felt the call of nature. I could not think of where we could go except perhaps to a café or to the Art Institute, where we might first have to pay an entry fee. Nonsense,

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said Jim crossing the street. We followed him into the Chicago Athletic Association, a private club. He nodded benignly to the doorman and directed us all to the men's room. "I didn't know you were a member," I remarked as we walked out. "I'm not, but I was taken to lunch here years ago." It is a very small thing, but at the time I was impressed by the way he took it for granted that an officer and gentleman is welcome anywhere.

Jim faced a number of moral crises. As a POW, his captors tortured him so hard that they broke his will, temporarily. Agreeing to denounce the United States in front of the TV cameras, he said he needed to get cleaned up. Once in the bathroom, he took the opportunity to mutilate his face to the point that he was useless for their propaganda. Perhaps an even graver crisis, one he thought about often over the years, was his experience at the Gulf of Tonkin. Although the Johnson administration used the so-called incident to justify war with North Vietnam, Jim, in charge of his squadron, knew that nothing had happened. As he said later, he flew so low that there was salt spray on his windshield, yet he saw nothing. It seemed an outrage that brave men should have to die in a war being waged by cowardly bureaucrats such as Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, and Admiral Stockdale spent his seven years of captivity worrying that the North Vietnamese, with the help of their antiwar friends in the United States, would put two and two together and force him to tell the truth. But communists are politicians, too, and they wanted only lies.

Jim Stockdale's story belongs to the history of republican virtue, and it would take the talents of Livy to do justice to him. He was a brave man who served in a war he did not entirely believe in but refused to take the easy way out. Put in charge of investigating cases of officers who collaborated with the enemy, he might have been expected to have been severe. Stoic philosophy is also the most judgmental and black-and-white in its treatment of human frailties. Stockdale, however, looked at the reality. Some collaborators were simply weak or dishonest, but many were too naive to understand that POWs have a difficult game to play. They may be justified in giving up trivial information to keep from being tortured to the point that they will give up something vital. Whenever he spoke of these matters, he displayed deep compassion for most of the collaborators, reserving his anger only for those who gained personal privileges at the expense of their country's interest and to the detriment of their fellow prisoners.

In a better age, this great warrior and patriot would be mourned publicly by the nation. In this age, he did not merit even a reference on the Drudge Report.

—*Thomas Fleming*

OBITER DICTA: Our poet this month is **B.R. Strahan**, who teaches poetry at Georgetown University. The publisher of *Visions-International*, Mr. Strahan has had over 500 poems published in such journals as *America*, *Christian Century*, *Cross Currents*, the *Seattle Review*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *First Things*, and the *Hollins Critic*. His latest book, *The Conjurer's Gallery*, was released in 2001 by Crosscultural Communications.

Our cover and interior art are provided by our designer, **Melanie Anderson**. Mrs. Anderson received her B.F.A. from Northern Illinois University.

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by Thomas Fleming

It Takes an Autodidact

Once upon a time, I decided to learn Japanese. I had none of the usual practical reasons: no business interests that would take me to Japan nor even an academic project comparing Noh plays with Attic tragedy. I knew next to nothing of Japan, though as a child, my imagination had been stirred by the *Mikado,* and later, when a college friend persuaded me to read the *Tale of Genji*, my mind was haunted by images of beautiful men and women spending languorous evenings composing allusive verses to the moon glinting through tree limbs mirrored in an azure pond.

I would never, however, have dreamed of learning Japanese, were it not for a friend and colleague at Miami University, who had studied in Japan. Under his influence, I began poking around in the Japanese literary classics, and, when I stumbled upon an old introduction to Japanese, I began learning the characters and a few basic words. Alas, it was not to be. My friend went away for the summer; I returned to South Carolina not long after; and although, every few years, I read a bit of Japanese history or literature, my mental picture, which has fewer details than a college survey course would provide, remains a compound of the *Mikado* and *The Seven Samurai*.

Had I been passionately interested, rather than merely curious, I might have persisted, but, without a friend's support and in the absence of a Japanese community in McClellanville, South Carolina (a village of 500), my idle curiosity withered like the plants sprung from seeds sown on stony ground. As I look back over a life I am tempted to begin calling long, I can see that my career as an autodidact has been directed both by individual friends and teachers and by entire communities.

From my piano teacher, Professor Brewsaugh, though I was his worst student, I learned to love and respect the formal beauty of serious music and never to mistake even the best jazz or country music for the art of Bach and Haydn. In high school, I detested Latin, because we wasted time on toga parties and Latin bingo, but I did learn from my merciless English teacher, Eunice Caldwell, that the rules of English grammar are as inflexible as the laws of the Medes and the Persians. She also taught me French, but only as a dead language with irregular verbs to master, so I was not surprised to learn, 20 years later when I ran into her by accident, that all along she had really been a Latin teacher. When I told her how mean we all thought she was, I thought the dear lady was going to cry, but she brightened up when I assured her that she was the only teacher who did me any good.

Turning 17, I grew fed up with high school and decided to skip my senior year. When Harvard told me they would accept me only after graduation, I sulked and applied to the College of Charleston. Perhaps it was for the best. I should have been lost at Harvard, but, in a school the size of a small village (enrollment: 500), I was able to lead a normal life. I could not hang out with an intellectual set, because there was none, apart from our highbrow discussions in French class. From my French professor, Henry Miller, I learned that there is a way of carefully reading a modern text without succumbing to the stultifying fantasies of the "New Criticism." Before a class on 19th-century novels, "Henri" would round up every translation in Charleston, and when he found there were copies of Zola circulating among certain low-minded students, he assigned Flaubert's long but unfinished (thank goodness) *Bouvard et Pécuchet*—a book I have refused to read to this very day.

From my Greek teachers, Kiffin Rockwell and Walton Morris, I learned not only a love for the language and literature but an appreciation of the purely pedantic misery that is required of anyone who wishes to grapple honestly with a text. This was a hard lesson for a conceited young man of Romantic tendencies, more interested in "the glory that was Greece" than in the uses of the dative case or the articular infinitive. But, as the Marquis of Halifax put it in a maxim I am fond of quoting, "the knowledge that is got without pains is kept without pleasure. The struggle for knowledge hath a pleasure in it like that of wrestling with a fine woman." Both my teachers had been the students of students of the great B.L. Gildersleeve, and they impressed upon me that I had to live up to a great tradition.

The value of pedantry was reinforced by my last mentor, Douglas Young, who taught me not only that the philological study of text and meter is an intrinsically amusing endeavor that sheds light on every passage of Greek tragedy but that every patch of ground on which human beings have lived and died has its own story to tell the traveler who will set himself aside to study the landscape and listen to the people. Once, as I waited for Douglas to finish up with an undergraduate, I heard him ask about the student's hometown, and, when the young man told him, adding that an "Englishman" (Young was a Scottish nationalist) would not have heard of the place, Douglas proceeded to give the young man a brief lecture on the geography, river system, and history of his native region.

I am equally in debt to little communities as to individual friends for introducing me to cultural traditions I might never have understood. For several years, I stayed with my friends Giuditta and Giuseppe Podestà in their study center (CIESLO) near Lecco, and, from them and their friends, I began to understand the character of Lombardia and penetrate the dense and mysterious text of the greatest novel ever written, *I Promessi Sposi*. It was through the Podestà that I met the late Mario Marcolla, who, though he had a firm grasp of English, took the trouble to speak clear, simple, and slow Italian with me until I could throw away the crutches he provided and walk on my own.

The distinction I am trying to make is not between the collectivist community and the free-minded individualist. It does not take a village to raise a child, and, when the "national village" assumes the task of rearing and educating children, the result is a nation of village idiots. On the other hand, no one really educates himself, and those who think they can end up either as followers of a guru or as slaves to one or another intellectual fashion. Libertarians, who pride themselves on being rational individuals, are less tolerant of deviation than the

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Inquisition was, and, when a libertarian does begin to think for himself, he almost immediately becomes the nucleus of a "movement" that imposes his heresy as a new orthodoxy.

As a boy, I read and reread the autobiographical novels of George Borrow, who may have inspired my early desire to learn languages. Borrow was himself the "*lavengro*," the master of tongues. In *The Romany Rye*, the author enjoys the hospitality of a country gentleman who has spent 35 years studying Chinese—but only the Chinese proverbs and verses written on porcelain. His fiancée had been fond of china, and, when she died, he consoled himself by studying the strange characters on the cups and bowls she collected. It was months before he accidentally discovered they represented the Chinese language. He also discovered, to his dismay, that the only available books on Chinese were written in French. Having nothing else to do with his life, he learned French sufficient for the study of Chinese, to which he dedicated all his free time. This story reveals two important aspects of autodidactism: first, the danger of falling into eccentricity (the poor man would never know enough Chinese to read literature or philosophy); and, second, the fundamental importance of friendship. Whatever he learned, as a grown man, was a testimonial of his love.

Every significant literary movement is really a little community of friends who encourage one another's talents and correct one another's faults until they are thinking thoughts and writing poems they might not otherwise have attempted. I think of the influence of Belloc on Chesterton or, better still, of the Fugitive poets whose most creative period comprised their years at Vanderbilt and the few following years before the group was shattered by ambition, mistrust, and the influence of more important friends out in the Great World.

This is the irremediable problem in all programs of "distance learning." Every week, it seems, I read of some Yankee-style shortcut to a college education, whether the University of Phoenix or some conservative-movement adventure in fundraising. Some of these projects may be useful today, when a college education means little more than a piece of paper or the mastery of a technical vocabulary that permits business and sociology majors to pretend to know something, but they should not be confused with what used to be known as a college education. There is simply no substitute for a community of discourse, whether that community is Aristotle's Lyceum or the not-quite-so-ancient College of Charleston (founded 1770), where I still remember the smell of the early-19th-century houses in which I passed so many hours studying Greek, sometimes as the only student in the class. In those days, we boys, whenever we were not talking about girls, talked incessantly about our studies. We learned one another's enthusiasms. A friend majoring in chemistry rekindled my previous interest in science, while he, to return the favor, signed up for Greek.

Such places no longer exist. My old college, absorbed by the state system, sends me a barrage of fundraising appeals boasting of how much bigger and better the *alma mater* is. Bigger it is, but not better. By the late 70's and early 80's, poor old Henry Miller told me he was in trouble for attempting to maintain the relaxed standards of the 1960's. Anyone over 50 who is still supporting his *alma mater* is probably subsidizing the institutionalized enemy of higher learning.

The first dilemma families face is whether to send their children to any school. Up to a point, families may form a community of discourse in which their children can learn, but it is very difficult, as my Italian and French friends insist, to train up your little barbarians without the standards of discipline and study that are imposed by someone less indulgent than loving parents. This lesson, which my wife and I learned the hard way, is a principal reason why so many homeschooling families form consortia and even schools.

There is no simple answer. We live within a country that is as opposed to sound learning as it is hostile to true religion. However, while most Americans accept the fake and flummery that is being palmed off by TV preachers, state universities, and whiz-bang online universities, some students—in or out of school—do not wish to go out of this world as ignorant as they were when they entered it. They are the students of all ages for whom we have begun preparing courses in history, classics, philosophy, and literature.

We know that most schools and universities have long ceased to be communities devoted to learning; we also understand that the virtual community is a contradiction in terms. But those who wish to learn may still enter, with a little help, into communities of the imagination.

Classics here provides the model. Students of classics are required to learn the languages, history, literature, philosophy, and art of two brilliant civilizations, Greece and Rome, and I have for 40 years approached every other period and culture in exactly the same way. I used to go into a Byzantine phase, rereading Gibbon and Runciman, trotting out texts of Eastern theologians, poets, and historians. Eventually, the fever would pass, and I would find myself, once again, dallying in the fleshpots of the English Restoration or the Antebellum South. One miserable summer, I coaxed my wife into cooking dinners according to the prevailing culture of my imagination.

I created The Rockford Institute Convivium as an extension of my own method of self-education. I spend months not only reading Roman republican history and Latin literature but studying topography (the study of terrain and street layout) and art, until the point has come when my imaginary world of republican Rome has fused with the reality of Rome today. Few of our students may take this adventure as seriously as I do, but most of them read something. Many learn a great deal, and, when they go home, they know how to begin learning about the Roman Republic or the French Revolution or the Scottish Enlightenment or ancient Sicily.

For a week or so, we have formed a little community among ourselves, but we have also reached out to another far greater community of long-dead men and women—warriors and statesmen, poets and painters—with whom our minds have become almost familiar as we walked their streets and examined their portraits, stood in their temples and knelt in their churches. For me, these Convivia involve as much labor as pleasure, but they are my way of paying the debt I owe my mentors and friends. ◁

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On the High Road

(from an old Dutch painting)

by B.R. Strahan

They have entered the light,
horses prancing in sun
that ambers the road.
Dogs run ahead, alert
for highwaymen or game.

Rich with gold braid
on cocked hats, brocaded coats;
these merchants follow their wares
to a fair. In the shade
a peasant cottage reclines
by a duck pond. The ducks call
and the dogs answer.
The men laugh and speak
of business, their women,
of Delft and Dortrecht.

Proud, their prime a summer
swell of oak leaves . . .
The town far behind,
their road turns past
the dark gilt frame
to end in a marble room.

Highway

(For Roosevelt Thompson, Rhodes Scholar.
Killed on The Jersey 'Pike.)

by B.R. Strahan

I've been up and down this highway
with lovers and friends,
head heavy with monoxide
and memories; turning years
to rubber dust and factory smoke.

I've passed so many broken rails,
skid marks on muddy shoulders.
It's all too easy. Slip off this ribbon.
Forget the typed notes, accusing faces,
the dates you have to keep.

The tumbling dice fall. The face dissolves
from the spider web of glass, leaves
just a sky of rain falling with the dusk.

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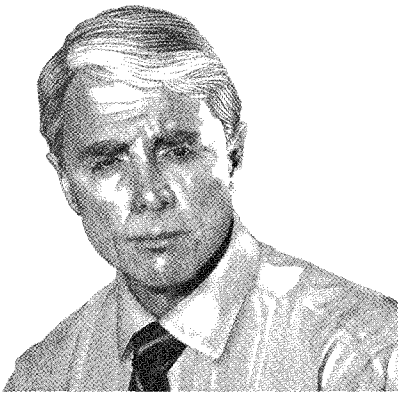
by Roger D. McGrath

Japan's Wars of Aggression



"Japan didn't fight wars of aggression. Only China now says so," declared Yuko Tojo, the granddaughter of Japan's wartime prime minister, Gen. Hideki Tojo, in an interview with the *Japan Times* in late June. Yuko was half right. Although Japan fought several wars of aggression, only China seems to raise the issue today. America dropped the topic during the 1970's. By the 1980's, the yen was up, and American memory, down, when the National Park Service introduced a new film for those visiting the Arizona Memorial. I was astounded to hear the film's narrator proclaim that Japan was simply defending her "unique culture" and that American sanctions had left the Japanese "with their backs to the wall." My letter to the Park Service never received a reply.

Yuko Tojo is now reiterating the revisionist theme, claiming that her grandfather and Japan were fighting a war of self-defense against the United States and other Western powers. In invading China, she argues, Japan was only defending her interests secured after World War I. China claims Japan killed 30 million Chinese doing so. Although the numbers may be inflated to camouflage the communist massacres following the close of World War II, the Japanese certainly killed millions of Chinese and went far beyond simply defending their interests.

Japan's wars of aggression began in 1894 with her invasion of Korea. Wresting control of Korea from China, she began an occupation that would last until the end of World War II and include a formal annexation in 1910 and the reduction of the people to vassals, slave laborers, and slave prostitutes—the latter euphemistically called "comfort girls" by the Japanese. At the time of her invasion of Korea, Japan was also contemplating war with Russia. Knowing that she was not yet strong enough to wage war with the bear to the north, she opened negotiations over the fate of Manchuria. While negotiating, she modernized and strengthened her army and navy. Then, in 1904, without a declaration of war, Japan launched a sneak attack on the Russian Pacific fleet anchored at Port Arthur on Manchuria's Liaotung Peninsula.

The Russo-Japanese War raged for a year and a half before President Theodore Roosevelt intervened and brought the belligerents together at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The resulting Treaty of Portsmouth gave southern Manchuria, including Port Arthur, and the southern half of Sakhalin Island to Japan and recognized Japanese supremacy in Korea. Though Japan could have expected little more, Japanese leaders told their people that the American President had cheated them out of vast territorial gains.

The victory over Russia was a tremendous achievement for Japan. It altered the balance of power in Asia and, although Russia was controlled by a moribund and calcified czarist regime, demonstrated the ability of an oriental power to defeat an occidental one. Japan gained great confidence and began to think of extending her control over all of East Asia and the western Pacific as well.

Japan entered World War I on the side of the Allies but only to gobble up German possessions in the Pacific, including Saipan and Tinian in the Marianas. Everything Chamorro was brutally suppressed, and more than 25,000 Japanese were settled on Saipan, their numbers surpassing the native Chamorros six to one. Japan quickly began the construction of air and naval bases on the islands—in violation of Japan's League of Nations Mandate—but protests were to no avail. Japan was also given a mandate over the Carolines and Marshalls and began to transform islands in those groups into unsinkable aircraft carriers.

Japan took German holdings on the Shantung Peninsula in China, as well. When China pressed for their return, Japan issued the 21 Demands. If all of the demands had been met, China would have become a virtual territory of Japan. As it was, Japan kept the German possessions, took control of steel and iron works in Central China, got special privileges in Chinese ports, and was allowed new opportunities to exploit Manchuria.

Useful to Japan's dreams of empire was her army of occupation in southern Manchuria. Known as the Kwantung Army, it precipitated several incidents in Manchuria in hopes of creating a pretext for further conquest. One of the incidents bore fruit. In September 1931, the army claimed that Chinese soldiers had tried to bomb a South Manchurian Railway train. Capitalizing on the "Manchurian Incident," the army moved swiftly to capture the capital city of Mukden, followed by the occupation of all of Manchuria. By 1932, Japan had turned Manchuria into the puppet state of Manchoukuo. The League of Nations demanded that the puppet state be dismantled and Chinese sovereignty, restored. Japan answered by formally quitting the League.

During 1933, the Japanese pushed from Manchuria into north China. This new aggression led to the establishment of a demilitarized zone between Beijing and the Great Wall, diplomatic protests notwithstanding. In 1934, Japan declared that she would allow no interference in her China policy. In 1937 came still another "incident." At the Marco Polo Bridge in Beijing, Japanese troops were fired on by—take your pick—Japanese provocateurs, Chinese communists, or Chinese soldiers. No matter: The Japanese used this "China Incident" as a pretext for a general invasion of China.

By December 1937, the Japanese had reached Nanking and began a two-month orgy of looting, burning, raping, torturing, and murdering. Even the friendly Germans were aghast at the Rape of Nanking and, in an official report, condemned the Japanese soldiers as "bestial machinery." At least 100,000 (perhaps as many as 300,000) Chinese civilians were slaughtered, more than 20,000 of them young girls who were raped and then dismembered. Thousands of men and boys were used for bayonet practice. Thousands of others were decapitated by Japanese officers testing their swords. If this was not a war of aggression—and a stunningly brutal and sadistic one, at that—I don't know what is.

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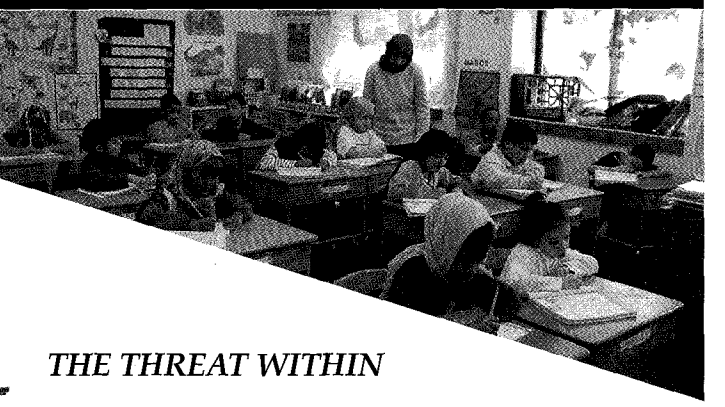
THE WAR ON TERROR
Are We Winning or Losing?

Four hard-hitting and candid panels that reveal where America truly stands in her "War on Terror."



THE FAILURE OF THE WEST

The Return of the Ottomans
While Europe and the United States clamor for the allegedly modern, secular state of Turkey to join the European Union, the last six human-rights advisors to the Turkish government have resigned in protest of their government's anti-Christian policies. Learn about the real Turkey and the chilling historical context from Dr. Thomas Fleming, editor of *Chronicles*.

Selling Muhammad the Rope
Col. Ronald Hatchett, former Reagan Administration arms negotiator, questions American antiterrorist rhetoric in light of a history of one foreign-policy blunder after another in the Middle East, arming and subsidizing people who hate America.

THE THREAT WITHIN

Legislative Reform *Versus* Jihad
Dr. Stephen Presser, *Chronicles'* legal-affairs editor and Raoul Berger chair of legal history at Northwestern University Law School, asks if the PATRIOT Act accords with the American legal tradition and finds enthusiasm in unexpected quarters for interpretations of the law that would support aggressive, proactive antiterrorist policies.

Islamic Cells in the Heartland
Scott P. Richert, executive editor of *Chronicles*, discusses the alarming growth of Islamic schools in America's heartland, looks at curricula designed to form the next generation of jihadists, and asks, "Can *sharia* happen here?"

CLOSING THE DOOR

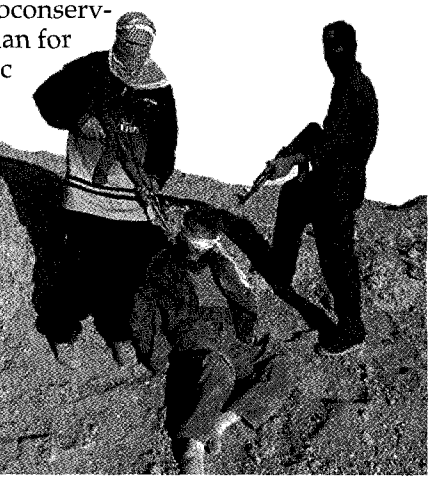
Immigration and Terrorism
Wayne Allensworth, intelligence analyst and native Texan, paints a grim picture of America's southern border and the current administration's failure to acknowledge, much less address, a problem that is no longer simply a matter of culture or economics but of national security.

Learning From Canada's Mistakes
Ambassador James Bissett, former director of the Canadian Immigration Service, describes the effects that Canada's appallingly lax citizenship laws have on the security of all of North America, forcing him to conclude that Canadian efforts in the War on Terror are little more than "feeble."

WEAK LINKS IN THE WAR ON TERROR

With Allies Like These . . .
Dr. Srdja Trifkovic, director of The Rockford Institute's Center for International Affairs, considers the War on Terror in light of American foreign policy in the Balkans, where independence for Kosovo and the centralization of Bosnia-Herzegovina threaten to facilitate the spread of *jihad* into the heart of Europe.

Washington's Failed Policy in the War on Terror
Thomas W. Pauken, former chairman of the Republican Party of Texas, looks at the wholesale takeover of American foreign policy by the neoconservatives and proposes a plan for a restoration of authentic conservative politics.



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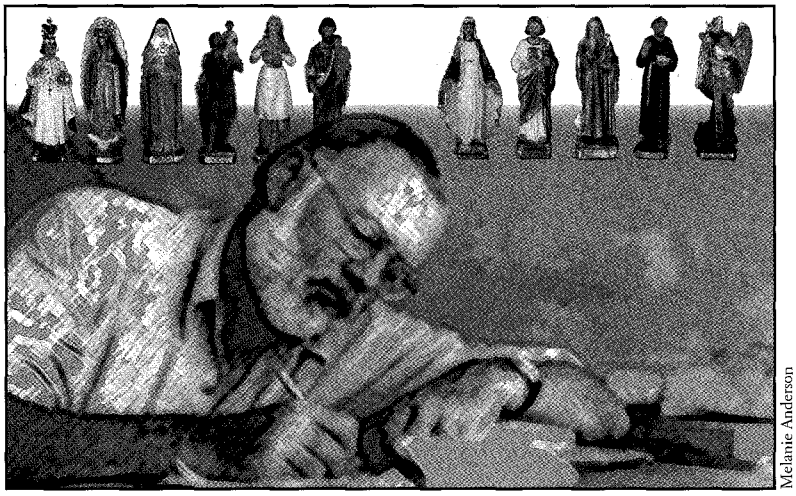
The Communion of Saints

Journeying Together

by Michael McMahon



Melanie Anderson

> Every one loved St Bridget. Even the sunbeams liked to be near her. One day an April shower came on, and, as she entered her cell, she flung her wet cloak over a sunbeam shining through the window, thinking it was a wooden beam. The bright ray willingly held up her mantle hour after hour, but at last the sun set, and the sunbeam was anxious to be gone too. So it begged that Bridget would come and take her cloak. She came quickly . . . and lifting down her cloak, said, "I thank thee, gentle friend; but haste away now, for the sun is set, and unless thou go fast thou wilt never come up with him!" In an instant the sunbeam had vanished into the night.

I wish I could say I remember laughing when I first read that story in *The Children's Book of Saints*, published in 1940 and reprinted six times before the 1952 edition that I still have on my shelves. The truth is, I cannot. But I can remember how much I hated such pious twaddle when I was a child. Reading those tales was a turn-off. If that was what saints were like, I didn't want them anywhere near me—and I certainly didn't ever want to be one, which seemed to require a skill that I had no wish to cultivate: the ability to roll the eyes heavenward, with the face fixed in a simpering grin.

So, when last year I was asked to write a book about them, I was hesitant. Even then, something of my childhood prejudice remained. In adult life, I had come to accept the saints intellectually and to regard some of them with admiration and affection; I have never had any difficulty with the Church's doctrine on saints. Whenever I tried to imagine them *en masse*, however, fairy-tale Bridgets and storybook Nicholases and Christophers pushed themselves soppily to the front of the crowd—and I backed off.

Agreeing to write that book meant that I had to stand my ground and look them all in the eye. I am glad I did; I learned a lot. The old proverb says that if you want to learn, you should teach, but I reckon that if you really want to learn, you should write a book. Teachers can think on their feet, refine their judgments in discussion, and defer or duck questions if they get stuck; but once a writer is in print, that's that. *Verba volant, scripta manent*: When you know your words are going to be published, you choose them carefully, and, in order to choose the right ones, you have to know your stuff. I do not claim that working on that book has made me any kind of expert, but I can say that it taught me much—and it has certainly taught me enough about saints to make me wish that I had not left it so long before getting to know them better.

In the event, my problem turned out to be its own solution: I learned to love the legends of the saints. I did not learn to believe those legends literally, of course, and I still think that to tell children fairy stories with real saints as heroes and heroines does all parties a disservice—but I did learn to appreciate the legends for what they are. In this, my greatest tutor was the Jesuit Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye, whose 1907 work *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography* analyzes the genre critically and honestly without descending into cynicism. Here he is on *The Golden Legend*, the 13th-century work that fixed so many of the fanciful stories of the saints in the popular imagination:

> I confess that, when reading it, it is somewhat difficult at times to refrain from a smile. But it is a sympathetic and tolerant smile and in no way disturbs the religious emotion excited by the picture of the virtues and heroic actions of the saints . . . The saints practise all the virtues in a superhuman degree: gentleness, mercy, the forgiveness

Michael McMahon's An Extraordinary Gathering of Saints *will be published by MQP next year.*

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> of injuries, mortification, renunciation, and they render these virtues loveable, and they urge Christians to practise them. Their life is, in truth, the concrete realisation of the spirit of the Gospel, and from the very fact that it brings home to us this sublime ideal, legend, like all poetry, can claim a higher degree of truth than history itself.

Understand this, and one is no longer tempted to throw the baby Saint Nicholas out with the bath water in which he is said to have stood up and prayed for two hours shortly after his birth. The historical Nicholas was a real enough saint, even if aftercomers did write a life to expand upon the few facts we know for certain about the fourth-century bishop of Myra. Saint Christopher, Saint Cecilia, Saint George, and many others got the same treatment. We know next to nothing about them; their legends celebrate their real sanctity symbolically. Some do so better than others—though few do so quite as unworthily as the story of Saint Bridget and her sunbeam.

I found out that some saints that many generations have venerated had never existed at all. Saint Margaret of Antioch had been declared apocryphal by Pope Gelasius in 494, but her story—unlike the dragon that was said to have swallowed her—refused to lie down and die. The legend of the unhistorical Saint Barbara was just as persistent: It has her beheaded by her own father, who is struck dead by lightning. I learned that Margaret and Barbara were no more real than the saintly Bishop Myriel in Hugo's *Les Miserables*—but then I also learned that Bishop Myriel was based closely on the very real Monsignor De Miollis, who was bishop of Digne from 1805 to 1838. When we are moved by Myriel's charity to Jean Valjean, what moves us is the kindness of a genuine historical figure. No doubt, medieval devotees of Barbara and Margaret were touched by equally genuine virtues—even if history does not record the names of the characters who first sparked their legends.

Delehaye acknowledges that it is impossible to pin down the origins of most of the colorful inventions found in early biographies of the saints, but he is able to explain how some stories improved in the telling:

> When St. Bernard came to preach the Crusade in the diocese of Constance, an archer in the bodyguard of the Duke of Zahringen scoffed both at the preaching and the preacher by declaring: "He can no more work miracles than I can." When the saint came forward to lay his hands on the sick, the scoffer perceived him and fell senseless to the ground, remaining unconscious for some time. Alexander of Cologne adds: "I was quite close to him when this occurred . . . We called the Abbot, and the poor man was unable to rise until Bernard came to us, offered up a prayer and helped him to his feet." Not one of the eyewitnesses says a word which would suggest a resurrection from death. And yet, a century later, Herbert, the author of a collection of St. Bernard's miracles, Conrad, author of the *Exordium*, and Caesarius of Heisterbach all affirm that the archer fell dead and that the saint restored him to life.

That tells us more about medieval historians than about Saint Bernard; I did not think less of him on account of their miraculous inventiveness. And I felt no more tempted to unsaint Hildegard of Bingen when I found that her mystic visions were probably brought on by migraine than I was inclined to dismiss Catherine of Siena when I read that her obsessive fasting corresponds to what we now call anorexia. Grace works through nature, and illness can be an opportunity for sanctity.

I came across all sorts of other biographical details that reminded me that saints are not fairy-tale figures, but real people. I was amused to read that, when Padre Pio was told by a psychologist that the marks of his stigmata were the result of meditating neurotically upon the Passion, he invited the expert to go and meditate neurotically on a bull and come back when he had grown horns. I laughed out loud at the idea of poor Teresa of Avila carrying out the orders of one of her confessors, who was convinced that her visions came from the Devil. He told her to "make the fig"—an obscene hand gesture of which every culture has its equivalent—every time she thought she saw Our Lord. She winced but did as she was ordered, explaining to Him that she was only doing it under obedience.

The lives of many of the postmedieval saints that I came across were stories of self-sacrifice and courage that would not need to be exaggerated to sit comfortably in books like *The Golden Legend.* When St. John Rigby was hanged, drawn, and quartered for his religion in 1600, he was suspended for such a short time that he was still able to stand when he was cut down. He cried, "God forgive you!" when the executioners seized him; they stood on his throat to shut him up. When they were pulling out his heart, he had enough strength left to throw them off before they finished their work.

An even crueler death was suffered by St. Jean de Brébeuf, the French Jesuit who made an 800-mile canoe journey to preach the gospel to the Huron Indians of Canada. In 1649, he was captured by the Huron's enemies, the Iroquois. They tied him to a stake and tortured him for hours. Having scalded him with boiling water in a mockery of Baptism, they hung red-hot hatchets around his neck, scalped him, and thrust a glowing iron down his throat before cutting out his heart. Witnesses said he suffered all in silence.

The sufferings of the 20th-century Ukrainian martyrs beatified in 2001 were as cruel as any endured under Diocletian. Blessed Joachim Senkivskyi, the abbot of Drohobych, was boiled to death in a cauldron by Bolsheviks in the town's prison on June 29, 1941. In the same month, Blessed Zynovii Kovalyk was crucified to a wall in the Zamarstynivska Street prison in Lviv. Another priest, Blessed Roman Lysko, was walled up alive and left to die. His fellow prisoners heard him singing psalms while he had the strength.

One cannot spend six months of one's life writing about characters such as these without being moved by the experience. When I began, I thought I was making a journey toward them, but I soon found that I was on a pilgrimage in their company. As our journey came to an end, I began to feel reluctant to leave them—but then I realized that I needn't, and I shouldn't. We say we believe in "the Communion of Saints" when we recite the Apostles' Creed, but to acknowledge a truth in the mind is not the same as to embrace it in the heart. Late medieval Christendom had its faults, but one of its glories was its sense of neighborliness with those in Heaven. In our own times of weak faith, bureaucrat bishops, and degraded, man-centered liturgy, we need the encouragement of the saints more than ever. A couple of years ago, one curial cardinal neatly expressed the reason for that need: "It is not the sporadic majorities which form in the Church here and there that determine the path she and we will take. The saints are the true, crucial majority, and it is from them that we take our bearings. Let us stick to them!" That cardinal is now Pope Benedict XVI. ◁

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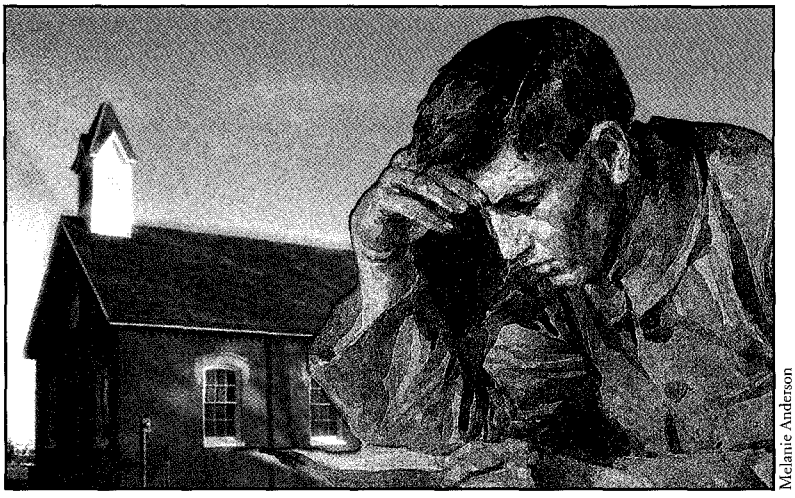
The Autodidact at Work and Play

Reflections on the Writerly Life

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.



Melanie Anderson

Every writer is an autodidact, for reasons that are fairly obvious when you think about it. First, the business of writing (as distinguished from composition) cannot be taught but must be learned by imitation and by practice. And, second, unless he is a scholar, newspaper journalist, or technical-scientific writer, a writer must discover his proper subject for himself—or, rather, it must discover *him*. Thus, formal education is the background, not the training, for the writing life—a thing hardly worth the misery and travail if it is nothing more than a career. For this writer, for whom education and educators have always been irritants, and ignorance boredom in its most complete form, writing is more than the ideal occupation; it is a godsend, a type of earthly salvation.

Schooling, for me, was always an affliction. Somehow, I endured 22 years of formal education. Only 14 of them were mandatory. Why did I inflict another eight elective ones on myself? Dropping out of school, in the context of the 60's, seemed a vulgar thing to do, for one thing. For another, it amounted to hurling myself into the Armed Forces' massive intake duct. (While plenty open to adventure, then as now, I had in mind the romantic life of a buckaroo on an Australian cattle ranch, not the slogging existence of a GI suffering gunshot wounds and jungle rot to deliver "freedom" to the Vietnamese, Thais, Cambodians, Laotians, and the other domino peoples of the world.) Lastly, the lecture system became less intrusive as I rose into the ranks of the upperclassmen, since (after 1968, especially) few members of the Columbia faculty bothered themselves with attendance taking. A lifelong distaste for all things academic might seem hard to reconcile with the fact that (a faculty brat myself) I did extremely well at the academic racket, scoring high marks in all but those subjects (mathematics and the theoretical sciences) that seemed to me at the time, as they do still, as unreal and remote as the Wars of the Roses are to Norman Podhoretz. Doing well in school, I ought to have enjoyed it. But for me, that was precisely the point. If I were capable of doing well in school, then why did I need to be there in the first place? Christ came to minister to the sick, not to the well. And so I have always thought school to be, as an unbelieving grandfather of mine used to say of church-going, for people in need of it—meaning not the stupid, necessarily, but those whose minds run along a track of a certain type, or gauge.

Today, in middle age, I still resent being made a captive audience to lengthy verbal assaults, whether in the form of academic discourses or of political speeches, my own included. (*Why?* I want to ask. If what you have to tell me really is important, please set it down in writing and give it to me to read, the printed word being my sole approach—music excepted—to intellectual concentration.) But during my 12 years at the Trinity School in New York City, where we were introduced to French in Grade One and Latin in Form I (seventh grade), I quite enjoyed the rote learning so many people find tedious: memorizing vocabulary lists, noun declensions, and verb conjugations at the strenuous insistence of Mr. Frank G. (Willie) Smith, an Englishman with a degree in classics from Balliol College, and the more genial cajoling of M. Paul Philippe Bolduc, a native *Parisien* educated at the Sorbonne. And, when it came to developing my skills in a living language by exercising them, I found speaking French to be an intoxicating delight. (Not a single word of English was ever permitted to be spoken in French class, in M. Bolduc's homeroom, or at his table in the lunch hall; those benighted students who had elected to study Spanish instead either kept their traps shut or learned a few words of the language of Racine, Chateaubriand, and Baudelaire.)

My enthusiasm for Latin and French was caught partly by

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contagion from the exuberant personalities of these two born teachers—by far the best instructors I ever had, men whom I not only respected but revered and remember today with the greatest affection—and partly from a natural affinity for language. Unfortunately, I missed out on Greek (being already in my senior year at Trinity when Mr. Smith consented to offer the language at the behest of the parents of a single student named James Trilling). The school also failed to offer instruction in Italian, an oversight I came to resent several years later when, in college, I decided I had a great future as an operatic tenor, found myself a voice teacher, and began a serious study of the operatic literature. Lacking a Signor Bolducci or Fabbro, I attempted to make up for lost opportunity by listening to records while following along with vocal scores and *libretti*. Yet, it was the mental training and habits beaten into me at Trinity (Mr. Smith pitched a Latin grammar with the speed, accuracy, and generally devastating effect of Sandy Koufax) that I had to fall back on decades later: first, in the late 80's, when I was writing a travel book about the Southwest border and set myself to study Spanish each night in the motel room; and, again, ten years later, when I began traveling to Italy and discovered the need to acquire a grammatical structure on which to arrange my Italian vocabulary and pronunciation. By now, I was a mature man, well past the age where the grinding, repetitive, and, above all, unimaginative discipline of memorization is either easy or pleasurable. However, I had also become something of an adept over the years at exploiting my past formal education as long-completed *background*; and so the going, in both Spanish and Italian, was far from being as gruesome an ordeal as it might otherwise have been.

Formal education is the background, not the training, for the writing life—a thing hardly worth the misery and travail if it is nothing more than a career.

I have never taken so much as an introductory course in economics, government, or political "science" and was already halfway through college before I ever opened a newspaper. Wholly apolitical as a boy, and disconnected almost entirely from the contemporary world, my consuming intellectual interests were literature and history—subjects that offered a quasi-imaginative world in which to live, while providing continuity with the reality of a determinedly retrospective upbringing. It took the antics of Commandant Rudd and his hairy but weak-chested barbarian cohorts to rip me from my warm apolitical womb; by my late 20's, however, when I joined the staff of *National Review*, I had developed strongly reactionary political opinions—ideas entirely detached, however, from any activist impulse. (It seemed to me 30 years ago, as it does today, that, for a man of my peculiar temperament and talents, writing is the most complete *and* effective type of political activism.) I had managed to acquire a working knowledge of European and American history. What I lacked, on going to NR, was a familiarity with the literature of specifically conservative political theory, past and present, and of Catholic social and political thought. (This had much to do with my father's lifelong preoccupation with historical scholarship rather than with contemporary politics and my essentially agnostic, though culturally Protestant, upbringing.) The professional—and, even more, the social—company of such colleagues as James Burnham, Bill Buckley, Jeff Hart, Joe Sobran, and Kevin Lynch caused to me feel my deficiency keenly, and I set out immediately after my arrival at the magazine to remedy it. The editorial offices at 150 East 35th Street served also as a temporary warehouse and distribution center for boxes of reprinted conservative classics, which the staff was at liberty to rifle in the interest, I imagine, of rendering us more efficacious foes of an ignorant, shallow, and ahistorical establishment. More importantly still, perhaps, I was a beneficiary of the tutelary generosity of Joe, who, in conversation and by means of pertinent suggestions for further reading, provided me with what amounted to an informal introductory course in conservative thought. And he offered something of infinitely greater value as well: an introduction, not so much to the Catholic Faith itself but to the way in which Catholics *think*—and *have* thought, for 2,000 years. No matter what has become of NR in recent years under the direction of a replacement staff and editorial board, there is no denying that my 13-and-a-half years with the magazine planted the mustard seed of my faith, in part by giving the Faith a face, and with it a band of companions in belief, a sense of corporatism, and of personal belonging.

The civilized minority of the human race can be divided, roughly and generally (though by no means equally), into two broad, overlapping categories: the educated and the self-educated. Educated people tend to believe in Education with a capital *E* and in what is called Continuing Education: They are those who help to support and maintain the modern community and four-year college system and the universities, where they enroll themselves in one series of courses after another in the endless quest for "self-improvement" through "adult education." Self-educated people, by comparison, being temperamentally averse to course studies, prefer to place themselves in the way of experience and avail themselves of whatever comes along by keeping an alert and open mind, while cultivating the humility required to take advantage of serendipitous opportunity.

My introduction, 29 years ago, to *National Review* was the beginning of the first postformal stage of my education. The second stage was my arrival, three years later, in Wyoming, where education of a completely different sort lay in waiting, just behind the nearest sagebrush hills. The one was basically familiar, insofar as it represented a furtherance of my intellectual development; the other, less so, despite the rural aspect of my upbringing on the family farm in Vermont. This time, the curriculum was experiential and social; my mentors, oil-field roughnecks, ranchers, outdoorsmen, and sportsmen, in place of intellectuals and writers. Once again, I was strongly aware of my deficiencies; once again, I felt at a powerful disadvantage, knowing I had a great deal to learn in (so it seemed to me) a very short time. All that I could do was my best, and so I did my best to do it.

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In common with the occasionally petulant Ronald Knox, I have a dislike of being "shown things"—castles, quaint towns, ruins, and so forth. But I am most appreciative being "shown how" to do things I do fairly, poorly, or not at all by people who know what they are doing when they do these things. I am willing, in other words, to be led—a psychological trait that does nothing at all for the development of what are praised as "leadership qualities" but is a powerful help in this business of "self-education." Unfortunately, it involves a certain deference, misunderstood by many healthy and active males as an expression of weakness, timidity, and self-doubt. And so, perhaps, it is. On the other hand, I am convinced that, were it not for my readiness to be shown, I could never have made the rural West my own, even to the extent that I have succeeded in doing so, as a man and a writer both. At issue is not expertise—not, anyway, expertise at the level that means expertness. I am no expert hunter, fisherman, marksman, horseman, hiker, or outdoorsman. On the other hand, I am more or less competent at hunting, fishing, shooting, hiking, and navigating in the backcountry without getting hurt or lost, and I am very good at some of these activities—as well as having a greater versatility and breadth of experience than many people I know who really *are* experts at one or another of them. (Breadth and versatility are, after native talent and developed skills, the qualities most valuable to a writer.) From Jack Mootz, I learned a great deal, more than a quarter-century ago now, about riflery, during the year we worked together in the oil patch; from Tom Sheeley, more recently, about backpacking; from Ed Detrixhe about handloading ammunition; from Ed Van Kirk, an animal scientist at the University of Wyoming, about fly casting; and so on. In no instance did I receive "lessons" from anyone (it would never have occurred to me to take "classes" in fly fishing or horseback riding); always, it was a matter of informal hints, tips, example and observation, imitation, and practice. One way or another, I have contrived to learn a great deal; what I have learned, I have succeeded in making my own, personally and professionally, in the way (say) that a singer makes a operatic role his own. A writer needs no degree of expertise greater than what gives him the ability to describe its application plausibly and vividly.

The singer's art requires musical literacy, a technical knowledge of vocal production, interpretive understanding, and substantial athletic skills, most of which must indeed be taught with formal rigor. Still, singing offers a way back to the subject of writing—emphatically a self-taught, or learned, art by which every one of the writer's other activities or accomplishments, whether taught or self-acquired, informs and merges itself with his primary aim and occupation. Of this unity of the writerly life, Hemingway would have been the perfect example, had he not wilfully blown his own hard-acquired unity to bloody fragments of bone and tissue, using a very costly and sophisticated instrument with which, as with his Corona typewriter and his quite irreplaceable brain, he had acquired a considerable degree of skill.

Hemingway, it is true, never went to college. Yet modern colleges have been infinitely more successful in providing their students with a philosophy conducive to blowing their brains out than they have in teaching them the literary formulae necessary to create the contemporary equivalent of *The Sun Also Rises*. Here, it seems to me, is an object lesson worth thinking about.

THE CONSERVATIVE BOOKSHELF

ESSENTIAL WORKS THAT IMPACT TODAY'S CONSERVATIVE THINKERS

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

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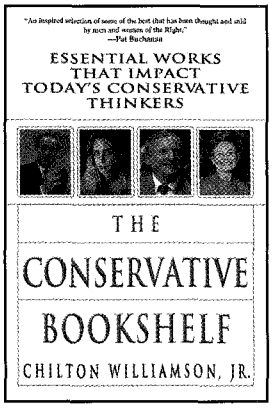
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THE CONSERVATIVE BOOKSHELF
CHILTON WILLIAMSON, JR.

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I'm Just a Travelin' Man

Education Through Wanderlust

by Derek Turner

"Education begins with life," said Benjamin Franklin somewhere. That was how it always seemed to me when I was growing up in Southern Ireland in the 1970's and 80's.

I enjoyed some things about school, especially my secondary school—an experimental comprehensive, one of only two in the country at that time, opened to cater to us non-Catholic "ethnic minority" members. There were subjects I liked—English, geography, and history—and I did well in them without even trying, because I was interested (although why they forced adolescent young men to read *Silas Marner*—which, even today, I find not the most riveting of reads—still puzzles me). But I disliked the organized sports (and still do). And there were many subjects I detested—mathematics, the sciences, and compulsory Irish—to the extent that I never even opened my test papers in these subjects when sitting for my final exams.

School seemed to place unwarrantable limitations on my preferred activities of smoking cigarettes and cannabis, gathering "magic mushrooms" on a nearby golf course when I should have been attending math lessons, and "singing" and playing guitar in a rock group. To this day, I am almost entirely ignorant of anything in mathematics beyond the 12 times tables, and I still could not pass muster on C.P. Snow's famous definition of being educated—knowing the Second Law of Thermodynamics (whatever thermodynamics are!). I looked forward to placing myself beyond the reach of these tedious impositions. While my older brother went on to be a brilliant, seemingly perpetual student of psychics and higher mathematics (he now teaches English in Mexico!), university seemed to me to mean merely a prolongation of childhood.

In a way, I had always enjoyed "traveling." Apart from regular trips around Ireland and to the United Kingdom when young, I was always an avid reader of everything from comics to classics. From my armchair, I "journeyed" with Herge to Syldavia; with Swift to Lilliput; to Switzerland to meet Heidi; to America with Fenimore Cooper; to Spain with Hemingway; with Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* to the South Pole and his *Westward Ho!* to Elizabethan England; with Defoe to the South Seas; with *Three Men in a Boat (to say Nothing of the Dog)* along the enchanted Edwardian Thames; to the New Forest with Marryat; to a fogbound London with Conan Doyle; and to the far future with H.G. Wells and Jules Verne.

I took my bookish habits with me into the merchant and then military navy. While continuing to read voraciously, I incidentally got a rare insight into the life and landscapes of Europe. I spent several more-or-less happy years creeping up West Country tidal creeks in little coasting vessels; watching whales off the Scottish coast, turtles off the Canaries, 25-foot basking sharks swimming directly below me from a ship off the coast of Mayo, and phosphorescent dolphins keeping company 200 miles off the Irish coast; getting drunk with Poles from the ship tied alongside us in Rotterdam; catching lizards in the baking hills outside Almeria; walking Valetta's walls and rescuing a shipmate who had lost his money to a hard-eyed prostitute and her harder-eyed minders in El Ferrol de Caudillo.

One of the disadvantages of being brought up in Ireland was that, even at a Protestant school with a subtly different educational curriculum, there was an overemphasis on parochial Irish history and literature at the expense of the British tradition. While J.M. Synge was an admirable playwright, he was not Shakespeare. The more I read and explored, the more I realized what I did not know—a feeling simultaneously humbling and inspiring. Now, I began to read and travel more discriminatingly, trying all the time to fill up gaps in my historical or literary knowledge.

There are many disadvantages to autodidacticism, but one of the advantages is surely the satisfyingly spontaneous nature of one's discoveries. The joy when one suddenly makes a connection between two historical figures, or events, or books is probably unknown to those who have had a more structured higher education. To stand in an English country church and realize suddenly that, "Ah, so this is the monument of the son of so-and-so, whose monument I saw in such-and-such, and who signed that treaty," is exceedingly satisfying. And yet this is a very common sensation in the history-haunted environs of England, where every shire and every London postcode is filled with resonances.

Upon resuming landlubber life, I came to live in London and found whole new worlds swimming into my ken, like a citywide Chapman's Homer. The first night I arrived in London, there was a massive storm over the Euston Road, and the air seemed charged with electricity—an appropriate curtain-raiser to what I could already tell would be a prolonged sojourn.

Maida Vale in west London, where I first lodged, is named in honor of a victorious 1806 battle against the French in Southern Italy but is not especially filled with literary connections (although John Tenniel, the illustrator of *Alice in Wonderland*, and John Masefield had both lived in postcode W9). It was very English, however, with its handsome Victorian houses, and it was only a short underground or bus ride into redolent central London, where every street name is a history lesson.

Heading in almost any other direction, Maida Vale was a good base for exploring less obvious landmarks, such as Kensal Green Cemetery, an impressive assemblage of Greek Revival

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Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, *published in London.*

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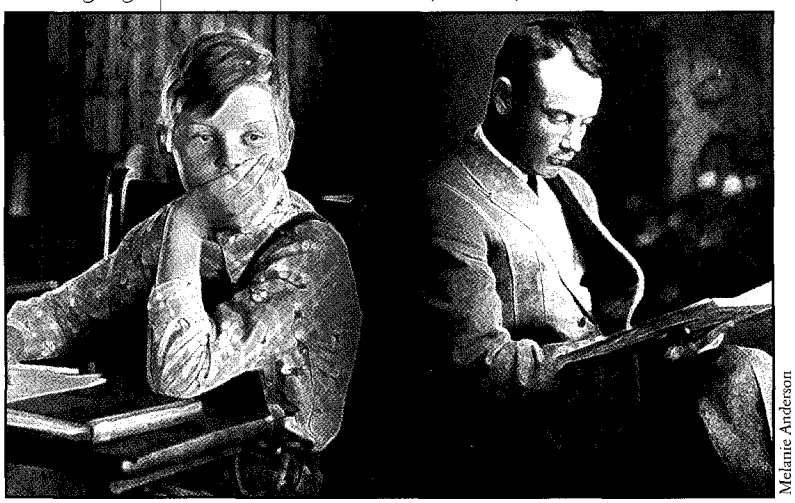
chapels, catacombs, monuments, and sarcophagi containing the moldering remains of Thomas Hood, the Brunels, Thackeray, Sydney Smith, Trollope, Leigh Hunt, and Wilkie Collins, sandwiched together in 54 acres alongside the canal and near the gasworks. Nearby, too, there was Hampstead, with its Pitt, Byron, Keats, Constable, Romney, and many other echoes, where I bought a copy of *Tristram Shandy* that had once belonged to Barbara Hepworth. There was Harrow, where the author of *Water Babies* and *Westward Ho!* had lived, whose famous school was the *alma mater* of Robert Peel, Sheridan, Winston Churchill, and many others whose names are carved on the oak wainscoting; Willesden, Kilburn, Bayswater, and a hundred other places filled with half-remembrances of names referred to in history books, lectures once attended, novels once read, paintings once seen, people once met, conversations once engaged in.

It was uncanny to see, in real life, buildings glimpsed as Hogarthian backgrounds; to visit the bedrooms or gravestones of those who had once bulked large in English affairs or the rooms where world-shaking treaties had been signed and from which empires had been administered; to stand on the spot where Charles I had stood while he was condemned to death; to drink in pubs once patronized by Dickens; to sit in the church pew where Samuel Johnson had sat, "much moved" by the intimations of impending doom. With my *London A-Z* rammed into my pocket, and a list of notes culled from my ever-growing minilibrary of books about London, I spent all of my available days traipsing around churches, chapels, cathedrals, closes, crescents, commons, council estates, streets, schools, stately homes, pumping stations, parks, palaces, tumbledown factories, along rivers and canals, always trying to see places where the famous had lived, where proclamations had been read, movements founded or riots started, trying to make connections, trying to make sense of this confusing, exhilarating "city of villages."

Soon, I bought a tiny flat in Deptford—a grimy but fascinating suburb, only 15 minutes from Charing Cross, like a little bit of the East End shunted south across the river. The flat was new, but it stood just off New Cross Road, which is now legendary as the pilgrim road of Chaucer and where Roman remains have been found in gardens, and I often walked home the five miles from London Bridge late at night, filled with alcohol and numinous impressions of historical romance.

I liked the shades of Pepys, Nelson, Drake, and a host of others in this area, the site of a major dockyard from 1514 right up until 1969. I had my suits made in a 17th-century shop on High Street and coveted the bow-fronted Georgian house at the southern end of the street, near where the drunks used to roll around in the summer's dust. There were early-19th-century warehouses, and there was even a little stretch of 200-year-old cobblestones. There were picturesque 1820's shops that housed the butcher's premises (his family's business there since 1828, perhaps still there today) and 1830's cottages where Deptford blended into then-respectable Lewisham; there was elegant Albury Street, with its cherubim porch supporters and wooden door cases, where Nelson had lodged. I often stopped to admire Saint Paul's church, John Betjeman's "jewel in the heart of Deptford," Thomas Archer's English Baroque interlude near the railway line (London's first line, opened in the 1840's on a series of impressive and extant arches in the characteristic yellow London brick).

Even better is Saint Nicholas's church on Deptford Green, with its sturdy tower (*circa* 1500), its redbrick Jacobean nave and charnel house with round-arched windows and Dutch gabling, the gloomy yews overhanging 18th-century walls, the painting of Queen Anne attributed to Kneller, the Valley of Dry Bones carving attributed to local boy Grinling Gibbons, and, most striking of all, the stone death's heads that sit atop the gateposts (which I first saw, memorably, crowned with snow, the whiteness accentuating the unfathomable blackness of the eyes). Here, among the shipwrights, chandlers, naval officers, and businessmen, is buried John Evelyn's infant son, Richard, who died in January 1657. ("After six fits of a quartan ague, with which it pleased God to visit him, dies my dear son, Richard, to our inexpressible grief and affliction, five years and three days only, but at that tender age a prodigy for wit and understanding; for beauty of body, a very angel; for endowment of mind, of incredible and rare hopes"—surely one of the most affecting segments of his most evocative journal.)



Melanie Anderson

The youthful czar Peter the Great stayed in John Evelyn's Deptford house, Sayes Court (then a Kentish countryside retreat) in 1698, while studying shipbuilding, relieving his pent-up energies by trashing the house and its famous garden—causing the diarist's servant to grumble to his master that "There is a house full of people, and right nasty." Deptford was the scene of Danish incursions (the little river that gave Deptford its name and purpose, the Ravensbourne, is supposedly named after the Danes' raven emblem), the defeat of the Cornish rebels in 1497, the murder of Christopher Marlowe in an argument over who should pay the "recknynge" in a drinking den, and an early inspiration to the authors of *King Kong* (Edgar Wallace was a Deptfordian) and *Tarka the Otter* (Henry Williamson also wrote a short story about the Ravensbourne).

From Deptford, it was easy to continue exploring those parts of London yet unexplored, to drop down into Kent, Surrey, or Sussex, or to go farther afield and to the Continent. From SE8, as well as regular trips abroad, my wife and I toured all around England—Elgar's Malvern Hills, Housman's Shropshire, Bunyan's Bedfordshire, Du Maurier's Cornwall, Laurie Lee's Cotswolds, Scott's Borders, Hardy's Wessex, Bennett's Potteries, Priestley's Yorkshire, Lowry's Lancashire, and a plethora of other places, each with its unique character and teeming with cultural and historical associations. And in between traveling to see places, we could read about traveling to see places and continue to try to make sense of the bewildering richness of England.

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Yet eventually it happened that we became a little tired, not of London as such, but of living in London. Like thousands of other middle-class people, we were fed up with high housing prices, grime, and crime. Gangs of black youths would hang around at New Cross Station, snatching bags and phones from women; a black man tried to rob me at knifepoint in Deptford's nature reserve, as I was walking home one winter's evening; there were drive-by shootings just up the road in Peckham, where Oliver Goldsmith had once taught at an academy. With such fauna proliferating, and the unspeakable Ken Livingstone recently elected as London's first mayor, cultural riches were eventually not enough of an inducement to stay. London, we felt, was rapidly becoming decivilized—not to mention de-Englished. When we finally left Deptford, in 2000, it was already around 40 percent Afro-Caribbean.

By then, we had located a small, neglected redbrick cottage on the Lincolnshire coast, 200 miles to the north, in an area away from all major transport axes and, accordingly, largely untouched by so many of the phenomena we disliked—an area described enticingly in a Channel 4 television program as "the most backward part of England." We guessed we would fit in quite well.

Although we have not found Lincolnshire to be quite as "backward" as we had hoped, it is something of a backwater—insofar as anywhere in an embattled England can now be so regarded. Yet even here, looking out over a 90-acre field yet near shifting salt marshes and the sea, we are surrounded not just by rare animals and plants but by new literary and historical ghosts.

Across the field is the church of All Saints, "the cathedral of the marsh," built around 1380 when the Lincolnshire Marsh was sending its wool across all of Europe, with its brass of 1424 showing Robert Hayter wearing a bascinet (the latest known English representation of what was already an obsolete piece of armor), its 15th-century wooden screens of sneering faces glaring at Jesus, and its organic patchwork exterior painted by John Piper. In *Sons and Lovers*, D.H. Lawrence describes his visits to "our" beach. We are just a few miles from Saltfleet Haven, where "our" river reaches the North Sea, now silted up, but which once sent two ships to fight the French in the 13th century. Going the other way, we are also near Mablethorpe, partly drowned by the sea in the great storms of 1287 and whose denizens long made a living ship breaking and smuggling. (We have a salvaged 19th-century teak ship's door in our cottage, which I pulled out of a sand dune and had remounted as an internal door.) Throughout the earliest work of Tennyson, there are hints of the Lincolnshire landscapes he lived in and loved, and in amongst the architectural wasteland of Skegness (from which, wrote that prickly patriot Nicklaus Pevsner, "the sea retreats twice a day far out in shame") can still be found the Vine Hotel where Tennyson stayed during his holidays in what was then a quiet fishing village founded at the Viking Skeggi's ness (or headland).

We are about seven miles from Alford, where one Thomas Paine spent time as a customs officer—a suitable employment for this irritating man. At nearby Willoughby, a local lad called John Smith dreamed of adventure and soon left, first to fight Turks for the king of Hungary, then to found a colony in honor of the Virgin Queen. We are ten miles from Louth, where Georgian houses bake in the hushed sunshine below Saint James' looming perpendicular spire, whose vicar launched the Pilgrimage of Grace against Henry VIII's monastery despoilers, for which he was hanged at Tyburn (not far from Maida Vale!). Scythes allegedly sported in anger by some of these conservative "pilgrims" in their fruitless campaign are on display in the modest church at Horncastle, 20 miles away, for centuries the scene of a riotous horse fair, described by George Borrow in his *Romany Rye*, one of the most wanderlust-inspiring books I have ever read. And then there is Lincoln Cathedral, proud on its limestone cliff high above the fens and wolds; Barton-upon-Humber, with its Saxon tower; Alkborough, with its mysterious turf maze and expansive views over the confluence of the Humber and Trent; Gainsborough, the setting, as "St Oggs," for *Mill on the Floss*, with its timber-framed Old Hall; Brigg, whose fair was immortalized in a beautiful folk song later rescued from oblivion by Percy Grainger and orchestrated by Frederick Delius; the original Boston with its stupendous "Stump"; and a host of other riches scattered carelessly across the landscape that gave birth and early sustenance to so much of "Albion's Seed." Here, on the indefinite edge of England, there are constant reminders of what she has been and—now just as important and far more urgent—what she could one day be again. ◈

We Are Here

(winter, Slovenia)
by B.R. Strahan

In the sunsets and the rain
In the rise and fall of rivers
In the empty hours
And the crowded days

Here the mountains speak
In heavy tones and snow
Is not a metaphor for silence
But a fearsome white noise

Coming to the edge of all
These words the verbs waving
Furiously from bright slopes
The nouns too frightened to speak

Ever green is a bare branch
A holiday hollowed out
From stone that echoes with tales
We tired of telling long ago

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Confessions of an Autodidact

A Place to Start

by David Gordon

Melanie Anderson

Is self-education a good idea? The greatest of my teachers, Walter Starkie, in his delightful autobiography *Scholars and Gypsies*, recalls a comment made in 1914 by his godfather, J.P Mahaffy, the legendary provost of Trinity College, Dublin, about W.B. Yeats: "Poor fellow! He is an *autodidaktos*—he never worked under a Master."

Yeats did not end up too badly, though; and, in these days of narrow academic specialization and unthinking left-wing nonsense, you must be able to think and read for yourself. The task is not easy, but, as Samuel Butler remarked about the verse "Ye cannot serve God and mammon": "Difficult, no doubt. But then nothing worth doing in life is easy."

In what follows, I shall recommend a few books that I have found valuable and then offer some suggestions on how to analyze critically what you are reading. You do not need me to tell you to read Aristotle and Shakespeare; the books on my list certainly are no substitute for the classics. You may find, though, that reading them will help you to understand the great books better.

Those who are starting a reading program need to avoid a mistake. People often begin with very ambitious goals: "I think I'll read all the dialogues of Plato the first week; then on to the *Summa Theologica* and the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the rest of the month." When they find that they cannot keep up with their plan, they throw over the whole scheme and give up.

It is much better to start with something easy. A short book that is the beginning of all wisdom in economic matters is Henry Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson*. Hazlitt, who wrote for many years on the subject for the *New York Times*, was largely self-educated; but his level of learning easily surpassed that of most academics. Few writers on economics match his clarity of thought. Readers of his book will never forget the "broken window fallacy." Someone who smashes a store window does not stimulate the economy by providing an opportunity for investment in a new window. True enough, a new window may be ordered; but, if the hooligan had not smashed the window, the storekeeper would have spent his money on something else. The fallacy lies in considering only the immediate results of an action. We also need to ask: What would happen if we do not act? Much government policy, Hazlitt shows, rests on this fallacy. You might think the fallacy obvious; but Paul Krugman, among many other worthies, has fallen victim to it.

Even shorter is *What Has Government Done to Our Money?*, a pamphlet by Murray Rothbard. Rothbard, who has influenced me on economics and politics more than anyone else, cuts through the obfuscations of monetary theory found in mainstream texts. He shows how government manipulation of money leads to disaster. The book is an excellent introduction to the thought of one of the greatest 20th-century economists.

Another very simple but profound work is *The Law*, by Frédéric Bastiat, a leading French 19th-century classical liberal and economist. Bastiat asks a devastating question: If people delegate power to the government, by what right does the government acquire new rights that individual persons lack? If, for example, individuals do not have the right to seize property to promote equality, why does government have the right to do so? All too often, Bastiat shows, planners view people as clay to be molded into shape rather than as human beings with wills of their own. The pamphlet made an indelible impression on me when I read it as a teenager.

If you have read these three, you are ready for more difficult material. Reading Rothbard soon becomes addictive: Once you have read his pamphlet on money, why not move on to his longer works? I remember how excited I felt when

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Man, Economy, and State appeared in 1962: Like his great teacher Ludwig von Mises, Rothbard deduces the whole body of economic theory from only a few axioms. Be sure to obtain the new edition, which includes *Power and Market*, a brilliant taxonomy of government intervention.

If you have read Rothbard, you must, of course, go on to Mises, the foremost exponent in the 20th century of the Austrian School of Economics. Many find his masterwork, *Human Action*, very hard going. I recommend that readers start with his *Theory and History*, which contains, among much else, a penetrating analysis of the Marxist theory of history. Friedrich Hayek told me that he thought very highly of this book, and it is the most neglected of Mises' major works. You also cannot miss *Socialism*, in which Mises develops his famous calculation argument. The socialists never recovered from it.

Those who are starting a reading program need to avoid a mistake. People often begin with very ambitious goals. Then, when they find that they cannot keep up with their plan, they throw over the whole scheme and give up.

Friedrich Hayek extended and deepened Bastiat's attack on planners as enemies of liberty. In *The Road to Serfdom*, he shows that economic planning requires a single set of values to govern production. Because people, in fact, have very different preferences, the required single set must be forcibly imposed. Planning thus leads to dictatorship; understanding this is essential to grasping the essence of both Nazism and communism. You should read this together with Mises' *Omnipotent Government*; Mises discusses a different but related argument that shows how interference with a free economy leads to socialism. Restrictions on the market do not work: Faced with failure, the planners must either return to the free market or intervene even more. If they follow the latter course, full-scale state control of the economy will soon ensue.

To be broadly educated, you cannot neglect philosophy. Again, I begin with a short book: *Reason and Argument*, by the English philosopher Peter Geach. The book will give you the essential logical tools you need to understand philosophical arguments. Geach concentrates on analyzing arguments rather than on technicalities of mathematical logic of interest only to specialists.

Is there an objective basis for ethics, as Aristotle and Aquinas maintained? The logical positivists notoriously held that ethical statements are mere expressions of emotion. Those who read Geach's *The Virtues* will be inoculated against this view. Elizabeth Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy" is basic: It is included in her *Collected Philosophical Papers*. She was a profound thinker, and all of her papers deserve careful study. She compels us to rethink conventional doctrine about a gap between "is" and "ought." Anscombe, who was Geach's wife, influenced another outstanding English philosopher, Philippa Foot. Foot's *Virtues and Vices* and *Natural Goodness* present a modern Aristotelian view. Henry Veatch's *For an Ontology of Morals* and *Human Rights: Fact or Fancy?* offer a gracefully written criticism of contemporary ethical philosophy.

The books on ethics I have so far recommended are, broadly speaking, Aristotelian in inspiration. Another important view, which stresses more than these writers the compelling force of moral obligation, is A.E. Taylor's *The Faith of A Moralist*. In this vast work, and in his short *Does God Exist?*, Taylor develops with great force a moral argument for the existence of God. Taylor was a philosophical scholar of immense learning. His reviews in *Mind* and other journals have been models for me.

Robert Nozick was among the most brilliant of all 20th-century philosophers. He was amazingly swift in argument, always able to devise an odd counterexample that would undermine any philosophical argument he was considering. If you read his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, you will get a very good idea of his personality. His criticism of John Rawls' account of distributive justice in Chapter Six of that book is a model of philosophical criticism. Nothing remains of Rawls' egalitarianism after Nozick is through with it. I definitely do not recommend Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, although this is by far the most influential work of 20th-century American political philosophy. It is a dull, unreadable affair: Antony Flew, an excellent British philosopher, treats it with withering contempt in his excellent *Equality in Liberty and Justice*.

Another excellent philosopher, with a very different cast of mind from Nozick's, is Donald Livingston. His *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium* warns against undue reliance on abstract thought, if taken apart from the "common life." (I think he would classify Nozick as just the sort of abstract philosopher against whom he cautions.) Livingston, in his main line of argument, follows David Hume, whose criticism of philosophy he ably expounds. Again taking inspiration from Hume, Livingston presents a brilliant philosophical and historical defense of decentralized government. M.E. Bradford, an outstanding literary historian, offers a closely related criticism of abstract egalitarianism and defense of the Southern tradition in *A Better Guide Than Reason* and *The Reactionary Imperative*. Bradford brilliantly criticized "equality of opportunity," which is not, he showed, the appropriate conservative answer to "equality of results."

Speculative metaphysical systems are very much out of fashion, but you are missing something vital if you omit them. J.M.E. McTaggart's *The Nature of Existence* is one of the greatest works of 20th-century philosophy, an amazing attempt to deduce a highly detailed and unusual view of the world from the proposition "something exists." F.H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, a once-famous work, is a beautifully written book by a highly original thinker.

Among more recent philosophers, J.N. Findlay's Gifford Lectures, *The Discipline of the Cave* and *The Transcendence of the Cave*, show that metaphysics is by no means dead. Findlay had a strangely evocative style. Here is a sample, from his essay

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"My Encounters With Wittgenstein":

> He returned to Cambridge during the phoney war: everything was blacked out at night, and one had the strange, almost mystical experience every Thursday of ascending a totally dark spiral staircase in Neville's Court, feeling one's way with one's feet like a horse fording a stream in one of Wittgenstein's examples, till one emerged in the light of Wittgenstein's room at the top.

Nozick's *Philosophical Explanations*—his most important book—shows the author's unequaled philosophical imagination at its full strength. If you work your way through it, you will encounter a highly original mind who offers new ideas in every paragraph. Nozick's rival as the most brilliant American analytical philosopher is Saul Kripke; many in this tradition rank him foremost in the world. His *Naming and Necessity* is a book of fundamental importance.

There is much more to being well educated than reading economics and philosophy, but I fear that I have left little space for such minor matters as history and literature. I will confine myself to three other titles. One of these will keep you occupied for quite some time: the eight-volume *History of Political Ideas* by Eric Voegelin. This displays the author's vast learning to full effect. The two volumes on the Middle Ages are a good place to start. Irving Babbitt's *Rousseau and Romanticism* is a far-reaching criticism of a harmful emotional form of thought and politics: It defends classical reason against Romantic extravagance. Yvor Winters' *In Defense of Reason* argues strongly for the primacy of morality in literature, from a point of view related to Babbitt's.

I imagine that these are enough books for a start. I recommend reading them straight through; I am not a proponent of elaborate outlines in the style of Mortimer Adler, the "great bookie." Some people, though, have found his *How to Read a Book* helpful; for a criticism, see I.A. Richards' *How to Read a Page*. When you read a book, you should not be satisfied with extracting the main ideas: This is why I distrust outlines. Often, the details and digressions in a book are its most important parts.

Probably the most important suggestion I can give is to read critically: Do not accept without question what sounds plausible. One illustration must here suffice. Almost all writers on politics assume that equality of some sort is desirable. Even Milton Friedman thinks equality is a good thing: He opposes state-mandated redistribution for its harmful effects, not because it is intrinsically wrong. Why should we agree with this? Nozick and Rothbard both point out that no argument for equality is ever presented. Often, people think that the disabled and the severely impoverished merit help; but this has nothing to do with making everyone equal in income or wealth. Once you think about it, the case for equality dissolves.

I have offered the preceding suggestions with hesitation. Many other books could have been listed, and I do not mean to imply that these books exceed all others in value. They are just a few works that have meant something to me. Once, after I had compiled a list of books on a different topic, a philosopher well known in certain circles berated me for not including his books. He was not a vain man, he protested, but he knew the value of his work. I wonder whether he thanks God that he is not as other men are. ◁

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American Historians and Their History

Scratching the Fleas

by Clyde Wilson

This article is drawn from the author's speech on accepting The Rockford Institute's first John Randolph Award at the historic Menger Hotel in San Antonio, a short distance from the Alamo.

For this occasion, I have been asked to reflect on "the historian's task" and "the American republican tradition." To do so could be a gloomy undertaking—examining two things apparently suffering through terminal illness. I shall try not to make it too gloomy.

First, let us consider that shrine of heroism nearby known as the Alamo. How should we think about it—or, rather, what is wrong with the way most Americans do think about it? We are taught to see the Alamo as one of the great exhibits of American valor. I beg to differ: It depends on what you mean by "American." The Alamo is an exhibit of Texan valor and Southern valor. If we call it "American," we might be tempted to think of the U.S. Army and then of the U.S. government, neither of which deserves any credit for the Alamo. Soon, we will have conflated the heroes of the Alamo with the U.S. government soldiers so eloquently eulogized by Lincoln, who destroyed the "Union" and founded the "nation" at Gettysburg. When we have slipped into this way of thinking, we have falsified the central story of American history by erecting a fake nationalist continuity of struggles for liberty. We have perverted the meaning of the Alamo, whose heroes sacrificed for the liberty of their land and their posterity.

The forces that triumphed at Gettysburg were still in the making at the time of the Alamo. But already, a significant segment of Northern Americans were denouncing the heroes of the Alamo, their fellow countrymen, as enemies—as violent frontier barbarians and pirates engaged in spreading the sin of slavery and stealing from the harmless Mexicans. These people kept Texas out of the Union for ten years. Texas finally was allowed to join, wisely reserving in her accession the right of secession. Fifteen years later, these same Northern forces mobilized two million men, a fourth of them foreigners, to destroy the liberty of Texas and keep her captive, as they openly boasted at the time, for the North's economic benefit. At the same time, triumphant New England pundits and German 48ers used the victory to convert American history from what had been a story of constitutional republican liberty into the story of a Redeemer Nation leading the march of humanity into an ideal future of Massachusetts-writ-large.

So, let us be careful to know what we mean when we say "American history," lest we misrepresent both history and the republican tradition. Otherwise, we might even end up, God forbid, equating the heroes of the Alamo with imperial wars against remote foreign peoples. While I am at it, let me point out the nationalist trick of adopting from the South as "American" anything that is favorably regarded, while only disfavored things are described as "Southern." Thus, we have books on "Celtic" valor to avoid discussing the disproportionate contribution of Southerners to American heroism. We have "country" music rather than Southern music. We have Texas, when she is in good favor, denominated as "Western" and "not Southern." In fact, historic Texas has been what she has been only because she is the offspring of Dixie. The Texans of song and story are Southerners on a new and bigger landscape. Otherwise, Texas would be just another Kansas or South Dakota of sodbusters, land speculators, and Yankee schoolmarms.

After almost a lifetime of considering what historianship is, I am satisfied that what it should be is storytelling. History is about human beings, and human beings do not live as a scientific experiment, nor as a logical proposition, nor as an ideological exhibit. Our existence is a drama, a story taking place in the mind of God. Through history, we have our only knowledge of the mysterious drama of our existence, beyond what has been granted us as Revelation.

I like the delightful saying of English historian Veronica Wedgwood: "History is not a science—it is an art, like all the other sciences." Even better, one by the great English poet and classicist A.E. Housman: "A historian is not like a scientist examining a specimen under a microscope. He is more like a dog searching for fleas." Or, more seriously, we can make the same point by calling on John Lukacs's perfect definition: "History is a certain kind of memory, organized and supported by evidence." In asserting that historians do not achieve certainty, I am not denying that they may be judged according to their degree of honesty and competence in handling evidence.

If history is best understood as a story, at least two things follow. First, a story—like that of the Alamo—is somebody's story; it is not everybody's story, as those with an agenda, whether they be nationalist ideologues or multiculturalists, claim. Everybody can learn from a story, but, if it is to be real and valid, it has to be some people's story. It follows that America in our time cannot have a real history, because America today does not have a real people. There was a time, peaking in the World War II era, when the inhabitants of this vast and diverse nation-state almost mingled into one people. That opportunity is now past. The inhabitants of the United States are corralled under the same territorial monopoly of force and exploitation; they share the same bread and circuses. They are not a people, only the motley subjects of an empire. Aggregations of Oprah watchers, sports fans, and mall shoppers do not a people make. After Augustus, the story of Rome ceases to be the story of an heroic and patriotic people. The Roman people pass from sight, and the history of Rome becomes only an account of more or less evil emperors and a chaos of peoples without stories. Such is America in the Era of Bush. The future history of

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the last national election can be written only as a meaningless contest in which the Jocks barely beat out the Nerds for possession of the imperial palace.

What is a poor historian to do if there is no core people whose story is to be told? For certain, we cannot turn to the academy. Most of the work of academic historians today can portray the American story in no other terms except those of an abstract fantasy of oppressors and oppressed. No society has ever had more professional historians and devoted more resources to historical work of all kinds—or produced more useless, irrelevant, and downright pernicious products—than modern America. I know an historian who teaches that the great Virginians of the American Revolution were like the Taliban—presumably, because they carried weapons and were not feminists. This is to reduce human experience to a paltry and partial perspective, to remove from it everything that is worthwhile and ennobling, usable and true. But this is what academic historians mostly do these days.

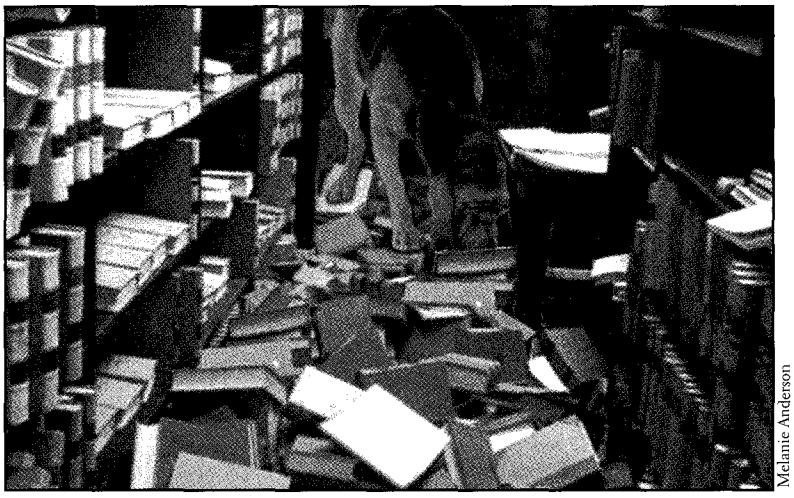
Second, if we accept that the historian's task is to tell somebody's story, it follows also that all stories may be told from more than one perspective—historians should not be engaged in categorical political and moral judgments. An historian should be trying to say something true and useful about human beings, and doing so modestly and cautiously. No historian can discover an indisputable truth, at least not about anything important. But that is what historians are claiming to do these days by reducing the drama of human experience to abstract, supposedly universal theory.

Now, because I am arguing the immutable variability of human perspectives on human experience, please do not accuse me of being a relativist or a deconstructionist. My text here is not Foucault. It is Scripture: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

The American Historical Association recently gave its grandest prize to a politically correct work that was later shown to be based on fabricated evidence. Then, there is Eric Foner. Professor Foner, at the time of the fall of the Soviet Union, was organizing public statements urging Russian leaders to save the noble communist experiment by crushing the Baltic peoples with the same ruthlessness, as he put it, with which Lincoln crushed the South. Foner has been elected president of both of the two most important academic historians' organizations in the United States and is retained by the Disney Corporation as a consultant.

The sins of omission are even greater. The most important work of history published in this country in the second half of the 20th century was John Lukacs's *Historical Consciousness*. It has been through three or four editions. To the best of my knowledge, it has never been reviewed or even noticed by any of the leading academic historical journals in this country. Why? Because it lies outside of the blind alley where academic historians follow their road to perdition. By the same token, if Jesus were to return tomorrow, the news media would not report the story. As in the case of the historians, it would not fit into their prefabricated pseudoreality. If the story became widespread enough, reporters would go to work to discredit the motives and sanity of those who were testifying to it. That would be the only reaction to truth of which they are capable.

History can take many forms, but I am speaking chiefly here about its most familiar form—history as the story of the nation-state—and in its American version. This history is supposed to be objective and factual, but it is also implicitly charged with a social purpose—to sustain a community with the stories of common ancestors and their legacy. As Ernest Renan remarked: "Getting history wrong is part of being a nation." The conflating of the Alamo and the U.S. Army is a product of the nationalist history that long dominated American thinking but has now been virtually supplanted by multiculturalism. The nationalist history was fake. It was really the history of New England Yankees, and it ignored, slandered, or coopted the stories of other Americans. Early on, the "intellectuals" of Massachusetts set out very deliberately—and you can document this with great specificity—to make the American story their exclusive property. After the War to Prevent Southern Independence, their mission was complete. The proud fox-hunting Virginia planter George Washington was turned into a prim New England saint, and the heroes of the Alamo were coopted for Lincoln's war on the South. To explore how Bostonian "American" history became multicultural/"gender" history would take many pages. I will only say that the two things are more closely related than many are willing to admit, just as debauchery and Puritanism are two sides of the same coin. But at least the old nationalist history had a limited fungibility. The new history has no redeemable value whatsoever.



Melanie Anderson

It used to be that academic historians were trained by immersion in primary sources. An historian might have a bias or a theory to prove, but his first duty was to absorb the primary materials and bring back an honest summary of what they had to tell. This was a pretty good rule, and I will not deny that there is still such good craftsmanship going on here and there. But academics as a group have abandoned the search for accuracy and proportion and weighed judgment. The primary sources are there to comb for illustrations of preestablished dogma, no matter how ripped from context. What is this dogma, and where does it come from? It is an abstraction about the conflict of classes. The prevailing "mainstream" interpretations of American history today are interpretations that 50 years ago were current only in the communist neighborhoods of the New York City boroughs—except that now few practitioners are naive enough to deal only in economic class conflict. Today, they wield the much more destructive weapons of race and "gender."

Back to my all-too-commonplace example of the historian who equates George Washington with the Taliban: It is a sadly true consequence, I think, of the dissolution of American peoplehood that the great Virginians of the War of Independence really are not a part of this historian's story. They are really not a part of the story of most of the inhabitants of the

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American Homeland Insecurity today—for whom George Washington can signify little more than a cartoon character with wooden teeth. What this historian has done is superimpose on the Virginia story something familiar from his own story—the oppressors of the Old World, the Cossacks who harassed his ancestors. But that is not all: This historian has further confused things by a false theory that human life is forever and only a story of oppressors and oppressed. As a result, the czar's Cossacks, the Taliban, and the great Virginians are best understood as equivalent oppressors. Such historianship constitutes neither a contribution to knowledge nor a useful teaching for society's young. Such, however, is the educational regime that is being dispersed today with immense resources and the prestige of the supposedly learned. Such malicious word games destroy the chance that we, or the rest of humanity, might gain wisdom from the stories of our forefathers.

Even when it is not badly distorted, academic history has become not the remembered story of human life but only a commentary on dogma. This falsifies the vast contingency and complexity of our existence and action in time and converts it into a tawdry, diminishing determinism. It poisons the community by denying its existence apart from conflicting elements. It converts great segments of humanity into oppressors who deserve only annihilation. The result is today's academic history—a weird combination of supposedly objective "social science" and romantic exaltation of favored minorities designated as "the oppressed." This history fails both as accurate record and as material for social comity. As Christopher Lasch pointed out years ago, scholars have abandoned the search for reality in favor of the classification of trivia. But it is worse than that. It is in the nature of dogma that dissenters are quickly suppressed. Conformity of opinion about what is significant and true about the past has never been as rigorous among academic historians as it is today.

What, then, are we to do about our stories, and about the historian's duty to tell stories that are true and useful? Our only hope is where it has always been found: in art—that is, imagination disciplined by honest evidence. It was observed long ago that the novel and history have a common ancestor: narrative. It has been more recently observed by John Lukacs that the two, where they are of the pure descent, may be moving together back to their origins. We already see much evidence that I could cite. It is not coincidence that the greatest history of the American war of 1861-65 was written by a novelist, the late Shelby Foote. Foote observed at the end of his 20 years' labor that the novelist and historian are both engaged in the same work—a search for understanding—though operating by partially differing methods. The academics do not treat the works of Solzhenitsyn as history. But how could the history of the Russian people in the last century ever be told more truthfully than by this great artist and thinker?

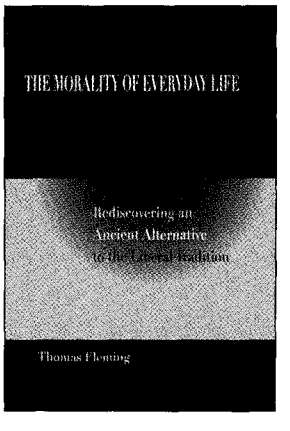
Henceforth, American history is likely to be only the story of the rise and fall of the imperial machinery and its masters. There is no people who can cherish an American story. However, there are some remnants of peoples with stories to tell who remain in this imperial heartland: traditional Catholics and Southerners, the real Californians described by Roger McGrath and the authentic Westerners about whom Chilton Williamson writes. Let us hope that the future brings forth scholars of art and integrity to craft and preserve for these remnants their stories. For it has been truly said that we are what we remember. ◁

The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.



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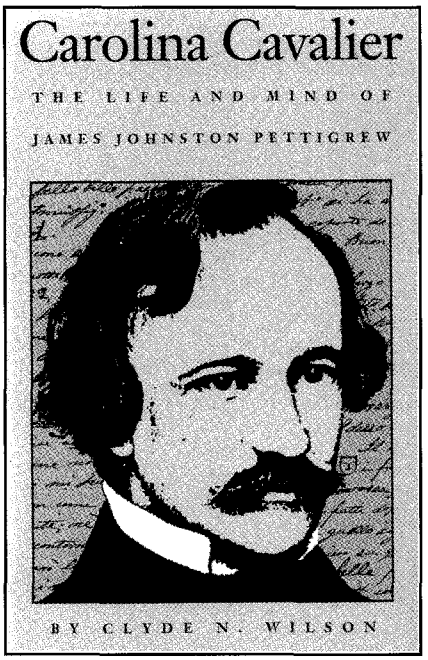

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Outsourcing Parenthood

Thou Hast Conquered, O Boomer

by Beverly Eakman

Two categories of parents emerged in the 1970's: those who wanted to rear children and those who merely wanted to have them. I first became aware of the distinction in 1972, about the time the feminist revolution was beginning its *blitzkrieg* through university campuses. I had been married about four years, and the stark differences in outlook between the two factions had a profound effect not only on the way I viewed starting a family but on my approach to teaching—my chosen career before escaping the profession for more satisfying pursuits.

My husband and I were among the first wave of baby boomers, born in 1946, at the end of World War II. Thus, we wound up oscillating, intellectually and emotionally, between the prewar belief system and the advancing era of antiauthoritarianism. For me, the former attitude was summed up in the popular lyrics to the theme song of a 1963 film, *Wives and Lovers*:

> Hey, little girl, comb your hair, fix your makeup;
> Soon he will open the door.
> Don't think because there's a ring on your finger,
> You needn't try anymore.
> For wives should always be lovers, too.
> Run to his arms the moment he comes home to you
> I'm warning you.
>
> Day after day, there are girls at the office
> And men will always be men
> Don't send him off with your hair still in curlers;
> You may not see him again.

Translation: Real women don't wear jeans—blue, stonewashed, or otherwise!

I can still remember the words to every verse, though I never saw the actual movie. At 16, the lyrics alone made a huge impression on me. So, unsurprisingly, as a young wife, I sequestered myself in another room if I was going to do my hair; never left anything as crass as a razor on the ledge of the bathtub; and tried, even when I was working, to have dinner fixed, the table set with candles, and to look presentable, no matter how tired I might have been. Some 60's-era wives were literally terrified of "losing their looks" to pregnancy.

But a different view was emerging. I was aware that, at other colleges, girls were throwing away their curlers along with their brassieres, wearing torn blue jeans, and eschewing makeup. A few even called guys for dates. Most had not quite reached the stage where they did not welcome flowers and an opened door.

Nevertheless, there were powerful pressures to buck convention. A youth-obsessed media was catering to, and actively spurring, rebellion against parents and societal norms. Whereas, in the 1950's, teen magazines and children's literature fed a young girl's desire to be "grown up" like Mommy—to wear high heels, maybe sneak a cigarette, dress up for dinner-dances, receive corsages, become proficient at something, marry, and rear children—by the 1970's, these notions had been stood on their head. The goals had changed for both sexes—to dressing like a bum; resisting formal attire for every occasion; drinking until one threw up; sleeping around; and indulging in as much idleness as possible while still living off the largess of one's parents.

That lasted until boomers became parents themselves, at which point their own elders smiled and said, "*Sayonara.*" What nobody counted on (except Pope Paul VI, who has more than been vindicated) was that the new attitude, combined with practicable contraception, would change the face of parenthood and family, and not for the better.

About the time my husband and I had been treated to the umpteenth display of childbirth films and breast-feeding from now-grown school chums and coworkers' wives—all of whom, it seemed, wound up divorced within five years—we realized a trend was afoot that would challenge our lifestyle and threaten our privacy. It may have been the Age of Aquarius, but the philosophical divide that resulted was neither free nor victimless. Sex came to be viewed as a recreational sport, and any babies became virtual trophies announcing an active sex life.

Exactly when we traditionalists, at first dubbed naive and impractical by cynical professors and the media, morphed into "repressive, paternalistic reactionaries" is unclear, but these pejoratives seemed to peak with the Vietnam War.

Couples who wanted to *rear* children were (and still are) interested in watching their offspring discover an exciting and bountiful world; seeing them take their first tentative steps, and not only in a physical sense; and passing on the values, culture, customs, and traditions that compose what is often referred to as the "extended family" experience.

Couples who sought merely to *have* children were (and still are) interested in proving their sexual attractiveness. No matter what celebrities of this faction said to the contrary, they were, in reality, advocating outsourced parenthood. Such couples either gave no thought to childrearing, or they adopted the socialist belief that "parenting" (as it came to be called) is best left to professionals. After the initial hullabaloo of giving birth wore off, they inevitably carried on with endeavors more appealing than changing diapers and wiping runny noses. The "extended family" was just one more thing to get away from—unless, of course, one wound up down-and-out with no better alternatives.

In the late 1970's, the more well-to-do went further in their justification, explaining that youngsters were inevitably having

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more fun with their peers than with adults, thereby institutionalizing what the media had already manufactured as the "generation gap." These "free-thinking" mothers felt they had done their job; they had "proved" their sexuality by enduring pregnancy and childbirth (and had carefully recorded these private moments on film for public display).

By 1978, daycare was big business, and, by the mid-1980's, child experts were aggressively encouraging parents to enroll their children in "early childhood" programs so that the youngsters would be "socialized" and "ready to learn."

But a strange thing happened. Not only were the offspring of the boomers *not* "socialized"—in the sense of becoming gregarious, well mannered, tactful, polite, fun, or even able to carry on a conversation—they were nervous, uptight, anxious, and torn by the mixed messages emanating from their various preoccupied guardians. They cried more, threw more temper-tantrums, fell ill when separated from their parents or peers, and were plagued with learning "disabilities." The more obnoxious they were, the less their parents wanted them.

I remember a particularly enlightening experience when we invited a couple from my husband's office to a barbecue at our home in 1978. As was customary (we thought), we invited the whole family. The wife asked, very tentatively: "Are you *sure* you want us to bring the *children*?" There were three of them, aged five to nine. I did not see a problem. "Well," the wife demurred, "they *can* be a little rowdy and inconsiderate."

Oh, c'mon, I thought. *I teach ninth-graders. How bad can it be?*

After they arrived, one child immediately set about opening all the cola bottles he found stored in our closet. The other young man kicked the coffee table repeatedly, right in front of his parents. The four-year-old girl interrupted and carried on continually; she finally settled for the company of our two dogs and, captivated, did not give us, or the dogs, any trouble. The couple spent the entire afternoon disciplining, or attempting to. We adults could barely communicate, much less channel the children into various activities.

"Good Lord," we said almost simultaneously after our guests had left. Is this what we have to look forward to as parents?

As a teacher, I was already beginning to have misgivings, but I chalked them up to having been an only child myself. When I was little, if a child merely cried in a restaurant, parents automatically took the youngster elsewhere so as not to disturb other customers. I could remember being four, trying to get my mother's attention on a bus while she was in conversation with another rider. Frustrated, I finally yelled at the top of my voice. I was summarily yanked off the bus and spanked right there on the sidewalk. Embarrassed and chastened, I decided such behavior was not a winner. Today, my mother would be arrested for child abuse, and my behavior undoubtedly would have escalated to more audacious acts of defiance.

By the mid-1990's, long after I had left teaching, the other shoe dropped. Teachers and care givers could not stand these kids, either. Adults were being kicked, bitten, and spat upon by children as young as three. Teachers complained that six-year-olds came to first grade unable to count to ten, name the colors, or recite the alphabet, much less use scissors or sit still for ten minutes—yet most had been "socialized" in nursery programs aimed at making sure youngsters were "ready to learn."

At that point, the couples who had, all these years, actually *coveted* the company of their children were suddenly looked upon with suspicion. "Doing something for children" was supposed to mean donating money or volunteering. In an era when most parents stopped attending even the open-house rituals promoted by schools, the notion of actually *teaching* one's children at home was, well, just weird.

Traditionalist women were particularly weird. Homemakers (much less home*schoolers*) "didn't have a life." Increasingly, such mothers were viewed as living *through* their children, not rearing them. Virtually no one, not even traditionalists themselves, foresaw the ramifications of this worldview. Then there was the "sexy" issue. Traditional women (even those who did not "pump gas") were not sexy. They were "desperate housewives," without the money.

By 2000, the established view was that parenthood was too much for a mere parent, married or otherwise—unless he had advanced degrees in behavioral psychology.

Few parents were aware of a thousand-plus-page landmark treatise in 1969 entitled the Behavioral Science Teacher Education Project (BSTEP), compiled by Michigan State University, one of the government's official research centers for teacher training. BSTEP's purpose was to determine what kind of future world teachers should be preparing. The document predicted that, by the 21st century, drugs would be available to control behavior, alter mood, and even raise intelligence. It forecast that teachers would be "clinicians" and that education would be "based in the behavioral sciences."

Government quietly began taking steps to ensure this outcome—from its treatment of parents in the courts, to the content of tests and surveys in the classroom, to the placement of psychologists in every public school (*via* the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965). Within 30 years of BSTEP, every quirky conduct, and a few that could not even qualify as idiosyncratic, was remediable with "professional counseling" and a psychotropic drug. All a behavior needed to be was inconvenient or bothersome.

However, there was a catch. The parent who refused such treatments could be cited for "medical neglect." To child "protection" agencies and the family courts, this was no different from denying insulin to a diabetic on religious grounds. In effect, parents no longer had legal standing.

Montgomery County gained distinction earlier this year for revisions to its eighth-through-tenth-grade sex-education curriculum, which included a video of a young female demonstrating how to fit a condom onto a cucumber and warned of the dangers of unprotected sex and cheap condoms that break. It also taught that "sex play with friends of the same gender is not uncommon during early adolescence" and, of course, that homosexuality is not a chosen lifestyle but a "given." Through the ensuing protests, the Montgomery County School Board insisted that parents still had plenty of time to provide input, yet no opinion contrary to the board's was considered. Although established policy actually encouraged parents to visit classrooms, it was trumped by newer state and federal codes that view parents essentially as breeders and feeders. As of this writing, public outrage has resulted in the curriculum being shelved for one year—after which the usual suspects will no doubt try another tactic to exhaust opponents, emotionally and financially.

Clueless boomer parents made their bed; today, all parents must lie in it. Boomers wanted to prove themselves as sexy breeders; 30 years later, these goods are being delivered. Once the boomers started outsourcing parenthood, government did what government does best: It took the whole nine yards. ©

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The Imperial Trajectory

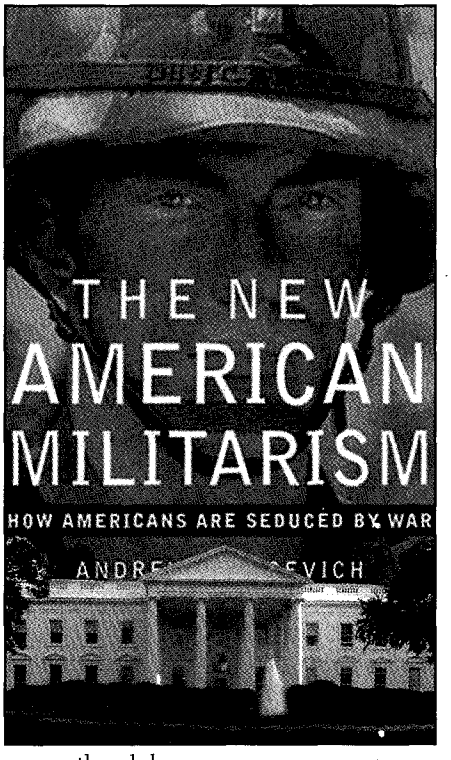
by Jerry Woodruff

"We oppose militarism. It means conquest abroad and intimidation and oppression at home. It means the strong arm which has ever been fatal to free institutions. It is what millions of our citizens have fled from Europe."
—Democratic National Platform, 1900

The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War
by Andrew J. Bacevich
New York: Oxford University Press; 270 pp., $28.00

◆

Mention militarism, and names that come to mind probably include men on horseback such as Julius Caesar and Napoleon Bonaparte, not such desk-bound keyboard jockeys as Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol. Yet these and other neoconservative writers have helped foster an intellectual climate conducive to the emergence of what Andrew J. Bacevich calls "a peculiarly American variant of militarism" in the post-Cold War era. Bacevich's new book features no villains or conspiracies, however—only a fortuitous convergence of social, political, geographic, and economic forces that has produced "the new militarism." The neoconservative intellectual network is presented as merely a single contingent that, in combination with the military establishment's "never again" reaction to America's ignominious rout in Vietnam, created a post-Cold War faith in all things military, leading not just to the invasion of Iraq but to a sprawling projection of American power across the globe.



Bacevich, a West Point graduate, self-described conservative, and critic of the Iraq war, explicitly rejects the notion that responsibility for the phenomenon lies with any particular president or his advisors. That explanation, he argues, "lets too many others off the hook and allows society at large to abdicate responsibility for what has come to pass." Nonetheless, Bacevich insists that his intent is not "to deprive George W. Bush or his advisers of whatever credit or blame they may deserve" for America's increasing reliance on military prowess to achieve foreign-policy goals. Instead, he wants to show that "a military predisposition was already in place both in official circles and among Americans more generally," well before the neocon-directed global "War on Terror."

Bacevich's argument is a formidable one, backed by an impressive array of supporting evidence that shows the author in masterful command of his subject. One of the virtues of *The New American Militarism* is that it is more analysis than polemic. Those conservatives, however, who take a longer view of America's empire-building and the role the military has played in the project may find the book's analysis incomplete. For, in Bacevich's view, the "new American militarism" did not sprout from the grand conquests of World War II and the resulting global projection of American military power (which seems never to have receded at war's end) but as a reaction to the defeat in Vietnam and the accompanying social upheavals of the 1960's.

That paradoxical outcome is partly the result of the efforts of a post-Vietnam officer corps whose members aligned themselves intellectually with what Bacevich describes as America's "forces of reaction" in an effort to refurbish the image of the American military establishment and to resist the radical social changes under way in what they feared amounted to the cultural Weimarization of the United States. Their primary motivations were to reassert their professional autonomy, so thoroughly undermined by the Department of Defense's civilian handlers during the war, and to rehabilitate the

Jerry Woodruff is the editor of Middle American News.

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military's reputation. Although these efforts ultimately produced what Bacevich calls "a remarkable rebirth of American military power" during the post-Vietnam Cold War years, the officers' reforms had unintended consequences, including the rise of "militaristic tendencies . . . incompatible with traditional conceptions of military professionalism that had set apart war as a separate domain, subject primarily to the authority of military officers."

In the aftermath of Vietnam, America's officer class cleaned house, purging the ranks of "the dopers and the bigots, the malcontents and the untrainable," and embarked on a campaign of innovation on a massive scale in strategy, tactics, weapons, training, and overall military doctrine.

The officers concentrated their efforts on remaking the military to fight neither the "total war" of nuclear annihilation represented by Hiroshima and Nagasaki nor the "people's war" of guerilla combat waged in Vietnam and Algeria. Instead, they created an armed force that could fight the kind of high-tech, high-velocity wars witnessed in 1967 and 1973 between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East.

The new doctrine for warfare—similar in basic ways to the *blitzkrieg* developed by the German Wehrmacht in the 1930's—exploits the advantages of the digital revolution, while relying on concentrated force, weapons of exceptional lethality that can be launched from great distances beyond the enemy's reach, and overwhelming suddenness and violence to blind and bewilder any foe. In Desert Storm—the first Persian Gulf War—that doctrine produced a stunning victory that the Joint Chiefs and civilian defense analysts believed would be replicated in America's future conventional wars. But the quick and efficient victory that had "redeemed" the U.S. military's reputation and prestige from the disaster of Vietnam also sparked a new post-Cold War vision among dazzled civilian officials who began to think that, "In war, it seemed, lay America's true comparative advantage." In an era when the United States had become the world's lone superpower, "larger questions about just what it was the Defense Department ought to be defending simply never came up for serious discussion." Thus, reform of the military resulted in an unprecedented capacity for projecting power around the globe, making, as Bacevich says, "the use or threatened use of armed force central to the American conception of international politics."

Neoconservative theoreticians who believe America's role in the world is to spread democracy and capitalism—by force, if necessary—played a major role in developing this new conception. Robert Kagan has succinctly summed up neoconservative thinking:

> [I]f the United States is founded on universal principles, how can Americans practice amoral indifference when those principles are under siege around the world? And if they do profess indifference, how can they manage to avoid the implications that their principles are not, in fact, universal?

Deploying the military where needed to impose those principles has acquired respectability among America's political elites. In a conversation about whether the United States should involve herself in the ethnic conflict in Bosnia during the early years of the Clinton administration, Madeleine Albright, then-U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, famously demanded of the reticent chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, "What's the point in having this superb military you are always talking about if we can't use it?" Military force was transformed from an option of "last resort" for the defense of vital interests into a tool of foreign policy—and morality.

The incorporation of military force as an adjunct to diplomacy in the 1990's did not occur in a social or political vacuum. Americans were already prepared to accept such a concept, Bacevich argues, through the celebration of, and fascination with, military culture that had been developing across society at large during the previous decade, at least. Bacevich places responsibility for popularizing the moral underpinning of America's new militarism squarely on the shoulders of President Ronald Reagan: "More than anyone else, he deserves the credit for conjuring up the myths that nurtured and sustain present-day American militarism." Following the comparatively dreary years of the Carter administration, the optimist Reagan "manipulated" the symbols of patriotism, frequently praised the armed services, spoke reverentially of soldiers as heroes, and used these themes to rally support for both his political campaigns and his administration's policies. He called on Americans to admire and appreciate the great deeds performed by soldiers in a "sanitized" version of American history and, for the first time, offered citizens a way to "support the troops" without having to confront physical risk themselves—a key component of the new militarism.

The sea change was aided by Hollywood, which happily produced films enlisting what Bacevich describes as "various Reaganesque motifs" (*An Officer and a Gentleman*, *Rambo*, *Top Gun*, *etc.*). Popular literature played a part, too, as such mass-market novels as *The Hunt for Red October*, *Red Storm Rising*, and *Patriot Games* fueled a new respect and admiration for the military establishment.

According to Bacevich, however, the one factor absent which the new American militarism becomes "inconceivable" is the rise of the conservative evangelical Protestant movement. In reaction to the social upheaval of the 1960's and the attacks on the U.S. military by the radical left, conservative evangelicals rose to defend American social and cultural norms against the radical-inspired counterculture. Defending America's role in Vietnam, they abandoned their traditional skepticism regarding the morality of force. "[I]nspired in no small measure by their devotion to Israel," Bacevich writes, "they articulated a highly permissive interpretation of the just war tradition . . . "

The modern conservative evangelical movement was forged during the Cold War, in which atheist communism represented the main temporal enemy of Christian activists. During those years, the charismatic Rev. Billy Graham assured Christians that America's posture toward the Soviet Union and our military action against communists in Korea and Vietnam were just. On the home front, evangelicals sought to protect the social fabric. "In a decadent and morally confused time, they came to celebrate the military itself as [a] bastion of the values required to stem the nation's slide toward perdition."

Reciprocating their support, the military made common cause with conservative Christians in the Vietnam era. This *entente* was signaled in 1972 when the U.S. Military Academy at West Point presented the Reverend Graham with its Sylvanus Thayer Award, conferred on outstanding citizens who exemplify the ideals of honor, duty, and country. Bacevich finds great significance in the award's citation praising the preacher for his de-

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fense of "traditional values"—a formulation "loaded with political connotations." Accepting the award, Graham expressed the hope that the values of West Point would fuse with religious traditionalism, the two becoming "the beacon lights to guide our nation" through tumultuous times. Eventually, evangelical preachers Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and others formed a Religious Coalition for a Moral Defense Policy, cementing religious belief with national defense. Thus was born a sociocultural alliance in which the Armed Forces, a prime target in the culture wars, embraced the evangelicals as allies in the fight against a common foe—at a time when conservatives in the Republican Party were seeking to mobilize the "religious right" on behalf of the GOP's political agenda. Today, of course, conservative Christians are an important and potent (though not monolithic) political force, with some 100 million Americans reportedly identifying themselves as evangelicals.

Although Bacevich believes that the "knee-jerk bellicosity" of Christian conservatives in the 1970's and 1980's has abated somewhat, he maintains that

> Conservative Christians have conferred a presumptive moral palatability on any occasion on which the United States resorts to force. . . . They have fostered among the legions of believing Americans a predisposition to see U.S. military power as inherently good. . . . In doing so, they have nurtured the pre-conditions that have enabled the American infatuation with military power to flourish.

According to many of the neoconservative thinkers and political advisors who provide the theoretical framework for force projection throughout the world, we are now engaged in World War IV: an open-ended global struggle against international terrorism. (In neoconservative thinking, the Cold War was World War III, lasting from 1947 to 1989, and was decisively won by the United States.) To Bacevich, however, the neoconservatives' World War IV is a superficial concept. A more realistic assessment of the meaning of the ongoing conflict, he argues, can be found in America's involvement in the Persian Gulf. The military, cultural, and geopolitical forces leading to the latest protracted conflict were overtly engaged by President Jimmy Carter in his State of the Union Address of January 1980, in which he declared that

> An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.

That doctrine, which resulted from the need to maintain American access to cheap oil and thereby preserve the American way of life, is, argues Bacevich, the visible policy expression of a belief held by American foreign-policy elites that, through the skillful application of military power, the United States will be able to "decide the fate not simply of the Persian Gulf proper but . . . of the entire Greater Middle East." It is this gigantically ambitious project, Bacevich asserts, that amounts to the *real* World War IV. Proponents of the new militarism see America's war on Iraq as an effort to establish an invincible force in the Middle East, resulting in a new political order in the center of the Persian Gulf. Policed by the United States, that new order will help pacify the region and guarantee uninterrupted oil supplies, while enforcing acceptance of a Jewish state in the Islamic Arab world. In Bacevich's view, the events of September 11, 2001, merely enhanced the progressive militarization of U.S. policy.

Is *militarism* really the right word to describe the phenomenon Bacevich identifies? Significantly, the "peculiarly American variant" that today dominates U.S. foreign policy is not the result of unprecedentedly heavy influence exercised by American military officers. In fact, both foreign policy and the military itself remain firmly under civilian control and direction. Not uniformed generals but "various members of the civilian elite, whether in pursuit of an ideological, humanitarian, or strategic agenda," are the ones who cultivate "an increasingly hearty appetite for intervention." As Michael Mann, author of *Incoherent Empire*, has observed, "the notion of civilian control of the military [has become] meaningless, since civilians [are] the leading militarists."

Neoconservative George Weigel, for example, has argued for a "democratic internationalism" that requires active global engagement, backed by American military power. That the driving force behind global interventionism comes from civilian idealists eager to impose a set of politically inspired and (putatively) morally derived values raises an important question about the very center of gravity of Bacevich's book. Is it not more accurate to describe this militarization process—the moralization of force—as simply the latest manifestation of America's longer-standing imperialism?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *militarism* as characterized by the spirit and tendencies of soldiers, the prevalence of military sentiments or ideals among the people, the tendency to regard military efficiency as the paramount interest of the state, and the predominance of the military class in government. Bacevich insists that the new American militarism fulfills all those elements except the last, since the "military class" in Washington really consists of civilians who are "politicians, civil servants, journalists," and others who simply have a "militarist" mindset. But the civilians who militarized U.S. foreign policy do not seek to impose the military virtues of obedience, discipline, honor, valor, and duty on anyone—nor are they themselves motivated by such virtues. They want, instead, to cultivate a global respect for "human rights" and to establish "democracy," "free markets," and, according to Gen. Wesley Clark, multiculturalism. ("There is no place in modern Europe for ethnically pure states. That's a 19th century idea and we are trying to transition into the 21st century, and we are going to do it with multiethnic states," he told CNN during America's military intervention against Serbia in 1999.)

The patriarchy and autocracy ordinarily associated with the military mentality are precisely what some neoconservative supporters of the Iraq war hope to abolish in the Arab world. Victor Davis Hanson believes that "the plague of tribalism, gender apartheid, human rights abuses, religious fanaticism, and patriarchy" that characterize Arab culture must be ended by "democracy—and its twin of open market capitalism." Hanson wants the Arab world transformed by the consumerism and individualism of the West through the "spread into traditional societies of Western-style popular

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culture, liberality and materialism . . . " That means replacing the Arab world's autocracies not with uniformed military rulers from West Point but with lawyers, journalists, advertising executives, investment bankers, and corporate CEOs. Nor has "military efficiency" become overnight the paramount interest of the globally hegemonic American state. Instead, that state seeks to maintain—in the words of neoconservative columnist Charles Krauthammer, who presumes to speak for it—a "uniquely benign imperium," which exists to protect, advance, and, where necessary, impose Robert Kagan's "universal principles" on behalf of all mankind. Thus, the "militarization" described by Bacevich seems more like a continuation of the older imperial policies pursued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during World War II. FDR's wartime propaganda, which depicted that war as a contest between democracy (representing "universal principles") and dictatorship, actually bears a striking similarity to the rationale for military force employed today.

In a brilliant and devastating review of Gen. Tommy Franks' memoir, *American Soldier* (*New Left Review*, September-October 2004), Bacevich noted that, "in ways not always appreciated by or even agreeable to those who actually pull triggers and drop bombs, war is . . . always profoundly political." So is military policy. Without a political content supplied by civilians, the militarization of American foreign policy could not have occurred. The origin of this policy is clearly not the Vietnam War but the global extension of American power following the Allied victory in World War II. The postwar efforts of American elites to maintain those far-flung troop garrisons, bases and airstrips, refueling depots and ports established the precedents without which the force projections of the 1990's and since would have been impossible.

In this context, Vietnam may be seen not as a turning point or a beginning but as a temporary downturn along a more extended imperial trajectory.

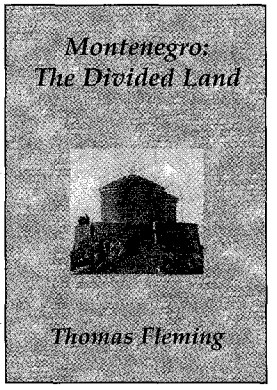
Sen. Robert Taft, speaking in the fall of 1940 against potential American intervention in the European war, even to protect England, warned, "If the English Channel is our frontier, and this is our war, then we will have to defend it for years to come." Sixty years after World War II ended, American troops are still in Europe (and Asia), and the expanded frontier Taft foresaw has moved far beyond the channel.

Today, that war is the prime source of the romanticized vision of soldiering and warfare that has become deeply embedded in the popular imagination. From *Saving Private Ryan* to the older *Sands of Iwo Jima*, no doubt more than a hundred films have been made, glorifying the exploits of U.S. troops as they make the world safe for democracy by killing thin-lipped, scar-faced Germans and vicious, buck-toothed Japanese. Even Ronald Reagan's often dreamy evocation of the very real sacrifices made by American men in uniform was more often than not derived from the history of World War II. Despite the temporary damage American military prestige sustained from attacks by the left during the Vietnam War, World War II reemerged unscathed in the modern national psyche. In an apparent effort to transfer some of that war's legitimacy to the Iraq invasion, for example, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice compared the terrorist attacks on American troops after the fall of Baghdad to the guerilla actions of Nazi "werewolves" who operated briefly in Allied-occupied Germany in the days before the seizure of Berlin.

The fact that the familiar political rhetoric and propaganda imagery persist 60 years later, accompanied by perennial celebrations of a never-ending list of battles, liberations, and beach landings, suggests the existence of enduring elites that reap some power-enhancing benefits from their use. The social formations maintained by America's imperial military projections can easily manipulate the symbols and rhetoric that animate various constituencies on behalf of one policy or another. Taken together, those policies all contribute to the social and political health of an elite that arranges for their implementation, even when the differing constituencies enlisted to support those policies are at odds with one another. Hence, on behalf of his invasion of Haiti to "restore democracy," President Clinton had no need to seek the backing of conservative evangelical Protestants, despite their alleged delight in witnessing America flex her military muscles. Support for that project came from the Congressional Black Caucus and its constituency of radical minorities eager to see their far-left ally, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, installed in Port-au-Prince.

No matter which constituencies are marshaled for which particular policies advocated by whichever party happens to occupy the White House, the American drive since World War II for a global, multicultural-democratic-capitalist imperium never slackens.

Bacevich's argument does not encompass that larger issue, which, if engaged, might have necessitated some adjustments to his presentation. Nonetheless, the impressive depth and force of his analysis are likely to bring *The New American Militarism* a significant measure of influence. ◁



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This Time, Be Prepared

The Serb land of Montenegro is once again at the crossroads of history. The blood-soaked mountains and dramatic coastline of this small land have been fought over by Illyrians, Macedonians, Romans, Byzantines, Turks, and Venetians, and, in the 20th century, by the armies of Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Germany. In World War II, Montenegro lost more men, per capita, than any nation of Europe, and now it is the latest target of the so-called international community, which has tried to create a phony separatist movement (complete with a bogus national church) to continue the disastrous policies that have involved the United States in wars over Bosnia and Kosovo.

Thomas Fleming has written the first well-researched history of Montenegro in the English language, taking the story from ancient times all the way up to the current crisis over separation from Serbia. This is no dry academic tome but a lively account of a brave people whose brave history rivals the tales of Leonidas and his Spartans at Thermopylae.

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The Party Pooper

by Derek Turner

The Party's Over: Blueprint for a Very English Revolution
by Keith Sutherland
Exeter: Imprint Academic; 196 pp., $39.90

◆

Keith Sutherland is a respected British publisher of such works as *History of Political Thought* and *Polis: The Journal of Greek Political Thought*, as well as the executive editor of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. He has also edited such important collections of essays as *The Rape of the Constitution?* (2000)—of which compendium Margaret Thatcher asked, "I only wonder if you need that question mark in the title." Imprint Academic (of which he is proprietor) has published many other books on subjects as diverse as education, the nature of liberalism, the prime ministership, legal reforms, and cultural history. Most recently, he was assailed by the far-left *Independent* as the publisher of an "Islamophobic rant" for having the temerity to issue former immigration caseworker Steve Moxon's *The Great Immigration Scandal*, which told the story of Moxon's dismissal by the Home Office for telling the sorry truth about Labour's *soi-disant* "firm but fair" immigration policy. To aggravate this diabolical sin against present pieties, Sutherland is also an occasional contributor to *Right Now!*; indeed, his book has its "remote origins" in an article that appeared in our pages in 2001.

Chronicles readers will by now have gathered that Sutherland is a person of considerable erudition, who has made—and is continuing to make—a major contribution to political and philosophical discourse in the United Kingdom; decidedly, he is not the "provincial scribbler" he dubs himself. So *The Party's Over* clearly merits attention from all who are concerned by the decay of democracy and social capital—not just in Britain but in all Western countries.

Echoing one of Socrates' arguments with Gorgias, Keith Sutherland is worried that we now have "a system of government that a) is not based on knowledge and competence and b) puts power in the hands of rhetoricians." He believes that this state of affairs has been largely caused, and is certainly exacerbated, by Britain's political-party system, which is, he realizes, "incapable of reflecting the fragmented and pluralistic reality of modern life." In the course of a dazzling constitutional Cook's Tour, Sutherland proceeds to describe Britain's political parties as "the bastard grandson of one of the darkest and most bloody periods of British history," "an anachronism," "a danger to democracy," and "an affront to the constitutional dignity of this country." The whole idea of "representative democracy" *à la* Burke is hopelessly outdated, he argues, in our age of large, transient, and diverse populations. Sutherland thinks also that advanced communications technology has rendered obsolescent the Victorian paraphernalia of geographical constituencies and ballot boxes.

He wishes to revitalize political life to limit politicians' powers of patronage and self-serving, to discourage cheap sloganeering and the kind of childish factionalism that prevents opposition parties supporting even sensible governmental policies, and to let ordinary people have a greater and more informed stake in decisionmaking. He wants to make politics more local, more practical, and "less interesting" and is inspired by the example of Michael Oakeshott and other empiricists (although here his thinking seems somewhat at odds with his earlier approving citation of one of the contributors to *The Rape of the Constitution?*, who had declared that "the forces of radicalism on the right and the left must be deployed against the incremental totalitarianism of the extremists of the authoritarian centre").

Although he is sketchy on detail, Sutherland proposes the replacement of the political party with a system whereby MPs are picked at random from the population, and also a stricter interpretation of the constitution that would allow the Crown once again to contribute to policymaking. The term "minister of the Crown" should, he believes, be more than just a polite fiction (although, paradoxically, under his proposals, the monarch would still have no real power). Meanwhile, government departments and the offices of members of Parliament should be drastically slimmed down and more power should be given back to local councils.

Sutherland argues that the major political parties have become so alike that they are effectively redundant. New Labourism has been met by Diet Toryism. A liberal market consensus prevails, from which politicians deviate at peril of contumely and ostracism. Instead of ideologically discrete parties, electors are increasingly presented with Tweedledum and Tweedledee candidates and vote on the basis of which party offers the largest bribes or simultaneously pulls the most heartstrings. (Sutherland compares the present system unfavorably with that existing before the 1832 Reform Act when, at least, "politicians bought elections with their own money." Better a few rotten boroughs, one might argue, than a rotten country.)

Today, whichever Buggins gets in, the results are the same, although each may differ in degree—the indulgence of evil, the erosion of both liberty and tradition, the penalization of the provident. It is small wonder that voter turnouts are dwindling, as people begin dimly to realize that their votes make little or no difference to their quality of life. And yet politicians like to claim "popular mandates" to pursue what often prove to be stupid or even disastrous policies. Sutherland dissects the myth of "popular mandates" witheringly, showing that almost never in recent history has any political party really possessed the trust of a majority of the population. Insofar as politicians are concerned about declining numbers of voters, they never consider the possibility that this phenomenon might be *their* fault. Instead of looking at the worm within and seeking to make their various parties more intelligent and responsive, some politicians decry populism and propose, instead, to make voting compulsory. Meanwhile, within the parties, the respective hierarchies are continually thinking of new ways to minimize the autonomy and influence of rank-and-file members. (In November, for example, Conservative Central Office announced plans to exclude grassroots Tories from having any say in the future over who is to be party leader.) The shortfall in private donations to political parties that affects all parties should be compensated for, an increasing number of politicians think, with taxpayers' money—a proposal clearly likely to make the parties even more similar than they are already.

Sutherland does not believe that proportional representation, which leads inevitably to instability and lack of direction, is the answer to the big-party mal-

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aise. Here, he fails to consider that, even if such changes may on occasion stymie political activity, the result may actually be beneficial: Surely, the possibility that the very inconsistency and occasional nonviability of proportional representation is a better reflection of human nature in all its complexity and perversity should not be rejected out of hand. There have been instances where the presence of small parties reinvigorates politics by forcing real issues onto the political radar—as today in Britain, with the advent of both the United Kingdom Independence Party and the British National Party. As for instability, would politics really be made easier if there were thousands of individual, revolving agendas, instead of six or seven party ones? (When dealing with large numbers of people, some simplification and debasement of messages and ideologies is sadly necessary.)

Nor does Sutherland favor direct democracy, in the form of referenda and citizens' initiatives. Such schemes, he feels, can only work within very close-knit communities, where there is a sense of *homonoia* or "same-mindedness," while referendum questions and answers can easily be manipulated by politicians. Yet, while Sutherland is rightly wary of such devices, surely they could have an important role to play in limiting party machinations.

Sutherland is fonder of judicial activism, which he regards as "a pluralistic defence against the elective dictatorship at the heart of our political system." Yet such is the state of British culture and education that such activism is at least as likely to have evil effects as the party variety. Today, judges are scarcely more likely to be motivated by common sense than are politicians.

Sutherland salts his text throughout with barbed remarks and amusing anecdotes, such as the story about Lloyd George, who got lost while on a motoring holiday and had to ask a passer-by where he was. Upon being told by the wag that he was "in a car," Lloyd George is supposed to have remarked that this was the perfect answer to a parliamentary question because "it was true, it was brief and it told him nothing he did not already know." Many government ministers since the Welsh Wizard seem to have drunk deeply from that particular fountain.

All in all, *The Party's Over* is an audacious and ingenious book, one that provides a splendid overview of British constitutional history. Yet the political party is not going to disappear any time soon. While it is true, as Sutherland points out, that political parties were only recognized in U.K. law as recently as 2000, the fact is irrelevant. Parties are now part of the British political and cultural scenery, and even those who really wish to challenge the *status quo* feel constrained to express themselves using the form and idiom of the political party. That is why there are still good-hearted people—even legislators—to be found within the British Conservative Party (as within the GOP, for that matter), despite the decades of disappointments under salesmen masquerading as statesmen. And even if all Sutherland's arguments were miraculously to become widely accepted, there is the force of inertia to reckon with: The major political parties themselves are not going to vote for their own abolition. (Even Sutherland admits that his hopes are probably "more wishful than thinking.")

The major parties will gradually mutate into something more satisfactory and viable, or they will eventually be replaced by new parties; either way, the political party *qua* political party is almost certainly here to stay. Recent rhetoric and policy proposals from the Conservatives hint that Michael Howard may be realizing the depths of public disillusionment with politicians. Thus, his party is quietly adopting vote-winning policies on crime and political correctness and advocating immigration restriction, while couching their policies in populist rhetoric about "timetables for action" and the like. It remains to be seen, however, whether these proposals will be lived up to—presuming, of course, that the Tories get back into office at all. Perhaps on this score, as on so much else, the Conservative Party will be outmaneuvered by Tony Blair, whose tactical shrewdness unfortunately makes up for his philosophical shallowness. Meanwhile, notions of casting ballots and of political life being organized around geographical constituencies are also likely to be around for some time to come, in the absence of any clear alternatives.

Sutherland's idea of allowing the Crown to resume some degree of input into legislation is likewise a pleasing but unrealistic one. Our emasculated monarchy is never likely to be able again to take a role in policymaking, despite the Prince of Wales' occasional (and welcome) irruptions into the headlines. The present incumbent of the throne seems perfectly content to read out whatever meaningless (and poorly written) political message she is told to read out by the government. The House of Windsor has lost the habit of ruling, as many Britons have lost the habit of deference toward, and are starting to lose even respect for, the monarchy. The audience for the Queen's traditional Christmas Day broadcast in 2004 was the lowest ever, while the egregiously politically correct content of that broadcast is unlikely to encourage royalist, patriotic-minded Britons to watch again in 2005. And, of course, even the most independent-minded and best-intentioned future rulers, being heavily dependent on fallible advisors, would be almost as vulnerable to political, social, and cultural pressures as any harried government minister.

The problems of our present politics are very deep and have many causes. Our institutions have been badly corrupted, and public faith in them is greatly corroded. These problems could never be resolved by simply swapping one imperfect system for another but only by combining technical improvements with a gradual cultural renaissance aimed at making people better educated, more honest, more open-minded, and more respectful of their civilization and traditions than they are today. Without such gradual uplift, all tinkering with the machinery of state is likely to prove more or less bootless. Nevertheless, Keith Sutherland has done us all a signal service through this impeccable analysis of an incontrovertible conundrum.

Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, *published in London.*

Moscow in Malibu

by James O. Tate

Red Star Over Hollywood: The Film Colony's Long Romance With the Left
by Ronald Radosh and Allis Radosh
San Francisco: Encounter Books; 309 pp., $25.95

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This new consideration of a well-worn subject is altogether justified for two salient reasons. The first is that

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Red Star Over Hollywood contains new material and judgment fortified by new research and information; the second, that the topic has been distorted not only by failures of interpretation but by continuing exploitation, even today. The Radoshes are quite clear on this second point: Hollywood continues to broadcast much mythology about the communists in Lala Land, the HUAC hearings, and all the rest of it. Though the emphasis here is on the 30's, 40's, and early 50's, the subsequent justification, victimology, and mendacity are remarkable in themselves, as contemporary bad movies have something to say about the nature of movies as well as about political-historical amnesia and manipulation.

The Way We Were (1973) rather misses the point of its own story, but don't try telling that to Barbra Streisand. *The Front* (1976) is not a Woody Allen movie but a movie starring Woody Allen, the comedy of which fails to mesh with its mawkish revisionism. *Marathon Man* (1976) mixes political mythology with melodrama in such an annoying way as to suggest a new interpretation of the torture scene. In this film, the CIA protects Nazis, and the protagonist's father was a victim of the blacklist. *The House on Carroll Street* (1987) has so much retro charm as a Hitchcock pastiche that you might not notice the political suggestion: Anticommunism equals pro-Fascism. *Fellow Traveller* (1989) wallows in the tragedy of the blacklist, as does *Guilty by Suspicion* (1991). *The Majestic* (2001) is the same old fantasy, and an odd Jim Carrey vehicle. *One of the Hollywood Ten* (2002), about Herbert Biberman and the making of *Salt of the Earth*, contains gross distortions of fact and nuance. And so it goes, as if we knew nothing about the history of the Communist Party in America and in Hollywood. Maybe nothing is what we are supposed to know—or not to know.

To remind us of the way we actually were, to repair some of the damage broadcast by Hollywood and institutionalized by the Academy, and to take advantage of the Venona files and other new information, Ronald and Allis Radosh have recreated the grounded meaning of Hollywood's infatuation with left-wing politics. One of their strongest points is to insist on the specific meaning of Stalinism; another is to emphasize Moscow's control of the American Communist Party.

Hollywood was targeted by the Comintern from early on and penetrated by agents answering directly to Moscow—including Otto Katz, who, in one of his identities, was involved with Lillian Hellman. Later on, when Katz was tortured and murdered during the Slansky episode in the Czechoslovakia of 1952, his old Stalinist friends in Hollywood knew he was innocent but kept mum—party discipline, you know.

But the penetration of Hollywood by international agents was matched by the conversion of film-industry types to communism, often in connection with a visit to the Soviet Union. Joseph Losey, Jay Leyda, Budd Schulberg, and Maurice Rapf are famous examples. John Howard Lawson and Lester Cole were Stalinists who became part of the "Hollywood Ten" only after years of service to the party in Hollywood. As the faithful danced to the tune that was called, however, a rather disconcerting hitch known as the Nazi-Soviet pact was signed. The political and intellectual contortions that followed this reversal of policy, which revealed the power of the party as well as its profound corruption, was a blow from which the alliance of liberals and communists never recovered. There would still be time, however, to contribute to a "war effort" that included making nice with Uncle Joe Stalin.

The Radoshes' account of a seldom-seen film, *Mission to Moscow* (1943), explains a lot of context that has been forgotten. Based on Amb. Joseph Davies' memoir of the same name (1941), the film is unadulterated Stalinist propaganda—basically a justification of the notorious purges of 1936-8. In an exquisite moment, the Radoshes point out that Jack Warner himself, in testifying to the HUAC, actually employed Stalinist logic, dismissing the criticisms of John Dewey as "Trotskyite." Davies had insisted that the film deny that the Soviet Union had invaded Finland in 1939, and so it did. Such extremity was denounced even by such leftists as James Agee, Edmund Wilson, and Dwight Macdonald. The crop that the Hollywood left was to reap was the one they had sown.

Another vital point registered by the Radoshes has to do with an article published in a French communist journal in April 1945 and signed by Jacques Duclos. Written in Moscow and approved by Stalin, it rejected cooperation with the West. The former head of the Communist Party in America, Earl Browder himself, later called the piece "the first *public* declaration of the Cold War." Similarly, in their account of the clash between the communists and HUAC, the authors make a new and authentic point in publishing a letter from John Garfield to Dore Schary dated October 13, 1950, in which that "victim" declared he was against communist policy and wanted to appear in anticommunist films. They suggest a revision of the received image of Garfield as a victim of the blacklist to that of a victim of the Communist Party.

Supplying useful perspectives on much disputed history, Ronald and Allis Radosh have given us an indispensable book that tells us what we need to know about such people as Elia Kazan and Victor Navasky. The resulting clarity allows us to begin to understand the power and ambiguity of film and the attraction it exerts over the public—and over those who would deceive the public.

Contributing editor James O. Tate teaches English at Dowling College on Long Island.

A Master of His Time

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin
by Gordon S. Wood
New York: Penguin Press; 320 pp., $25.95

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Gordon S. Wood's *Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* is a welcome testimony to the renewed interest in America's Founding Fathers. Although most Americans have a clear idea as to the importance of Washington's military role and Jefferson's contribution in writing the Declaration of Independence, few appreciate the pivotal part Franklin played in legitimizing the Revolution among foreign powers. Indeed—as Wood points out so clearly—without Franklin, funding from France would have been impossible, and the Revolution would have failed. According to Wood, it was Franklin's personal charm and his friendship with Charles Vergennes, who became virtually first minister under Louis XVI, that moved the French to lend the Americans the money they needed to fight the British. Furthermore, the personality and writings of Franklin, as

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Wood explains, were instrumental in forming the ethos of the hard-working, self-made man that led eventually to the establishment of America's middle class.

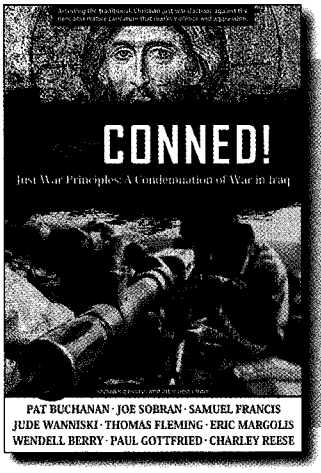
This book is not a biography but the story of how Franklin, the loyal Tory, came to embrace the American Revolution. Franklin's break with England formally took place in 1775 in the wake of the display of arrogance by the British government toward the rights of the colonists, precipitated by the passage of the Coercive Acts (1774), which closed Boston Harbor in retaliation for the Tea Party. For Franklin, this was not merely a political *faux pas*; the contempt with which he was treated by the British was a deeply personal affront to his dignity. It seems that Franklin gradually (if also grudgingly) came to the realization that England regarded America as essentially a source of raw materials. Despite Franklin's hopes of persuading King George's government to allow American representation in Parliament, it became clear that this was not to be the case.

A good part of the book is dedicated to Franklin's efforts to establish himself as a gentleman. The 18th century defined such a person as "one who is master of his own time." By achieving his goal, Franklin gained the status and time necessary to devote himself to public affairs. He was an overwhelming success at this endeavor, thanks to a prodigious intellect, a strong desire to perfect himself in virtue, an entrepreneurial spirit, and an agreeable personality. His famous *Poor Richard's Almanac* was probably America's first offering in the literary genre known today as the "self-help book." The proverbs therein captured, or perhaps invented, the American "can do" spirit and greatly contributed to the rugged individualism that enabled the rapid growth in American industry and the wealth it created.

As a scientist and philosopher, Franklin was a world-renowned celebrity. He reveled in the respect his reputation garnered for him both in England and in France, where he spent the greater part of his later years after retirement from his printing business. So great was Franklin's love of Europe and Europe's love of Franklin that many doubted his loyalty to the American cause. This doubt earned for him some strong enemies in the new republic, who, upon his death in 1790, successfully dampened celebrations of his life and legacy. His loyalty, however, deserved no such doubt. So adamant was Franklin about the righteousness of the colonists' cause that he broke forever his relationship with his once doted-upon son William who, as the crown-appointed governor of New Jersey, remained loyal to England. Franklin's fame, according to Wood, revived only in the 19th century, and then on account not of his diplomatic accomplishments but of his writings, which were used to inspire virtue and industry among the youth of the burgeoning American population.

Wood shows us why Franklin belongs in the pantheon of American revolutionary heroes on equal footing with Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Hamilton. His book is a good start in reacquainting America with a national treasure who, early in the life of our republic, made a vital impact on the international scene that enabled the Revolution to succeed and whose literary contributions set the tone for the culture that permeates America to this day.

Fr. Michael P. Orsi is a research fellow in law and religion at Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan.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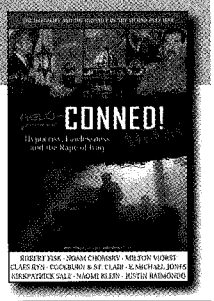

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by Scott P. Richert

Master of Your Domain

With the U.S. Supreme Court's June decision in *Kelo* v. *New London*, the truth of this column's conceit—that Rockford, Illinois, is a microcosm of America—has never been more clear. One of the running themes of this column since shortly after it began in 2001 as a "Letter From Rockford" has been the abuse of the power of eminent domain by local government. Now, the Supreme Court has essentially declared that Winnebago County and the city of Rockford were not guilty of abuse; they were simply ahead of the times.

Kelo has substantially removed state and local eminent-domain proceedings from review by the federal courts. For this reason, some libertarians have cheered the ruling, seeing in it the beginnings of a reversal of the Incorporation Doctrine by which the restrictions of the Bill of Rights (applied originally only to the federal government) have been extended to the states.

If only it were so simple. While it is true that the Fifth Amendment prohibition on taking private property "for public use, without just compensation" was never meant to apply to the states, it is also true that the amendment was never meant to serve as a summary of the common-law understanding of eminent domain—which did apply to all levels of government—but merely to ensure that, if eminent domain were exercised on the *federal* level (something that did not occur until 1876), "just compensation" would be provided. While it may seem otherwise to latter-day Americans who memorized the Bill of Rights in junior high, it is not self-evident that, if property is to be taken for "public use," "just compensation" must be provided. The Framers, however, agreed that this was the right thing to do, and they codified their understanding in the Fifth Amendment.

The Fifth Amendment does point to one important aspect of the common-law understanding of eminent domain that bound all governments in America—local, state, and federal. Property could be taken only for "public use," and this is where the foes of the Incorporation Doctrine who have greeted *Kelo* with enthusiasm are sorely mistaken. In the process of removing federal-court oversight of state and local eminent-domain proceedings, the Supreme Court has expanded the concept of eminent domain to include circumstances that the common law would have flatly rejected—and, in so doing, has expanded the power of local and state governments to tyrannical levels. Post-*Kelo*, every governmental body can redistribute any property within its boundaries as it sees fit—as long as it can argue that the new owner will put it to better economic use than the previous one had. And who will judge whether the governmental body has proved its argument? According to *Kelo*, that judgment is left up to the governmental body itself, not the courts.

While, to many of the readers of *Chronicles*, taking a 40-acre parking lot from Wal-Mart and breaking it up into eight 5-acre homesteads is self-evidently a better economic use of the property, no local government will ever see it that way. The quality of the economic use of a property will be based almost entirely upon the aggregate of the monetary transactions that take place on that property—which is simply another way of saying that anyone who can promise that he will generate a greater combination of property taxes and sales taxes than you do automatically has a stronger claim to your property than you have. To cities such as Rockford, where many residents believe that developers have too much control over local government, the Supreme Court has said, "You ain't seen nothing yet."

In small towns and medium-sized cities across the United States, the most expensive block of homes does not come close to generating property taxes comparable to the combination of property taxes and sales taxes that would be generated by a Wal-Mart or a megamall on the same spot. (And, of course, most houses do not generate any sales taxes.) On the day that *Kelo* was handed down, the corporate attorneys in Bentonville, Arkansas, no doubt had to put on waders to protect their fancy cowboy boots from being stained by their drool.

Retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, in a rare moment of clearheadedness, accurately summed up the import of this decision in her dissent: "The beneficiaries are likely to be those citizens with disproportionate influence and power in the political process, large corporations and development firms."

What is most surprising about the *Kelo* decision is not that the Supreme Court has redefined eminent domain; it is that the Court took so long to do so. In 2000, the city of Rockford initiated eminent-domain proceedings against the owners of the Torres Market, a Mexican grocery in the southwest quadrant of the city. At the time, there were no full-service groceries in the area, and, for several years, the Torreses had met the needs of this economically depressed, largely black and Hispanic neighborhood as best they could. When a local developer approached the city with a plan to place an IGA on the Torres property, it should have been obvious that he was trying to increase the chance that his proposed store would succeed by eliminating his only significant competition. (There were plenty of vacant properties on which the IGA could have been built.)

Shortly after then-mayor Charles Box announced that the city intended to take the Torres Market by eminent domain and to hand the property over to the developer of the IGA, I appeared on a local television talk show with the city's director of community development, Barbara Richardson. When I pressed her to explain how the city could justify this redistribution of property under the traditional understanding of eminent domain, she replied that, "If you believe that government has any role in economic development, then you must believe that government can do whatever is necessary in order to facilitate economic development." At the time, that seemed like a socialist argument; today, it is the law of the land.

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Letter From Queensland

by R.J. Stove

Bland Rube Triumphant

◆

Let us now praise famous Queenslanders, in particular the most famous Queenslander of the lot: Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, who died, aged 94, on April 26. One of Australia's most surefooted and most intuitively brilliant political leaders, Sir Joh, as everyone called him (though he received his knighthood only in 1983, it is now impossible to imagine him as plain Mr. Bjelke-Petersen), ruled his home state as premier from 1968 to 1987. By his tenure's length and ethos, he appalled the liberal commentariat, while being regarded by most of his subjects—"subjects" is *le mot juste*—with amused tolerance that often enough, when fueled by non-Queenslanders' snickering, flared into passionate approval. Queensland, in his time (and long before), had a seemingly ineradicable reputation as "the Deep North," awash with Faulknerian craziness. In more genteel Australian regions, it inspired an endless catalogue of jokes—mostly witless—about bananas, pineapples, and incestuous cross-burning rednecks. Not that its sovereign cared. The more vociferously *Ausländer* elements demonized him, the happier Sir Joh grew, the bigger the majorities he piled up in the state's unicameral legislature, and the more attractive Queensland's low-tax economy became to business investors of sometimes dubious morals but always impressive wealth creation. (Uniquely among state leaders of his time, Sir Joh achieved budget surpluses year after year.)

Readers nostalgic about America's gubernatorial populists of old—the Huey and Earl Longs, the George C. Wallaces, the Eugene and Herman Talmadges—can surely consider shedding a manly tear for Sir Joh, who exercised a similar electoral appeal. Yet, to the pantheon of such bosses, Sir Joh, head of Queensland's Country (renamed, in 1982, National) Party, contributed a distinctive new type: the *drab* populist. He could not match Wallace's outbursts of fighting-cock temper, or Huey's impish taunts, or brother Earl's more languid rebukes ("Guv'nor, Ah'm with yo' when yo' right, not when yo' wrong." "Yo' stoopid S.O.B., Ah don't *need* yo' when Ah'm right!"). The elder Talmadge, displaying truly Whitmanesque egalitarianism, once interrupted an interview with Alistair Cooke so as to visit the lavatory. Sir Joh—a Lutheran pastor's son who boasted that he owed his political success to his daily Bible readings—would not have permitted himself such coarseness for all the mining profits in the Southern Hemisphere.

If he ever uttered a swearword, or even touched alcohol, friend and foe alike remained ignorant of the occasion. His visage, somewhat psittacine, revealed nothing; Providence had inscrutably lavished the ideal poker face upon one who abhorred card games. When you saw him on television (he had the mysterious gift of making even a color TV set look black-and-white), he gave no clue by his comportment as to whether he had won an election or lost it. Except that, until just before the very end, he always won. Like Eisenhower, he assumed with genius the role of bland rube, tangled in his own labyrinthine syntax. His reelections became as ceremonial as the changing of Buckingham Palace's guard, and much less dynamic. In 1969, 1972, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, and 1986, voters put him back in office. None save the most besotted psephologists remembers most of the luckless Labor Party candidates whom his electoral juggernaut turned, one after another, into roadkill. The only such candidate to achieve wider notice, 1983's Keith Wright, did so not on political grounds but because his taste for schoolgirls later sent him to a less-than-idyllic penitentiary.

New Class spokespersons railed against Sir Joh's electoral methods, notably the gerrymander by which the inhabitants of ghost towns possessed thrice or four-times as much voting power as the citizens of Queensland's state capital, Brisbane. (With some accuracy, Sir Joh regarded Brisbane as part of the Soviet Empire and avoided the city whenever possible.) This gerrymander had antedated his rule by decades. He did not invent it; he merely perfected it. But though a master of electoral malapportionment, he shunned electoral corruption. Apparently, he never wanted—certainly he never attempted—to imitate, let alone emulate, LBJ and Richard Daley, Sr., by granting suffrage to entire graveyards. He would have considered this not merely immoral but a waste of effort.

To his administrative endurance, he matched formidable psychic discipline. For 15 years, as even Britain's *Daily Telegraph* admitted in an otherwise petulant obituary, Sir Joh lived in a cowshed. Possessing the farmer's capacity for months of solitude (he grew peanuts near Kingaroy, in the state's rural southeast), he felt more grief about needing to shoot clapped-out horses than about finishing off parliamentary rivals. A bachelor until his early 40's, he attained unclouded happiness through his marriage to a civil servant, Florence Gilmour, who, as Lady Flo Bjelke-Petersen, represented Queensland during the 1980's in the Senate. As premier, Sir Joh prohibited street protests, forbade sex-education programs in schools, enforced every last statute against sodomites, and ensured that girlie magazines, if sold at all, had their more explicit portraiture removed (thus making them worthless to the black market). Upon the development of Queensland's nude theater, Sir Joh exercised a wholly obstructive influence. Playgoers longing for *Hair* and *Oh! Calcutta!* had to flee to Sydney's fleshpots. "Banned in Queensland!" became as proverbial an artistic boast as "Banned in Boston!" had been in Mencken's day.

By these acts, Sir Joh earned permanent leftist and neocon execration, outside as well as within Australia. The death notice in London's *Independent* condemned his rule as "despotic." Yet those of us who are neither leftists nor neocons managed to survive in one piece his putative tyranny (while noting that even his biggest infrastructure projects never included a reeducation camp). By so strong an instinct did he embody social conservatism that he never even viewed himself as a social conservative. He thought that sort of talk was just a needlessly pretentious synonym for "common decency." It is difficult, in 2005, to say that he erred. Besides, his supposed despotism stopped well short of real elective dictatorships: He scrupulously avoided persecuting gun owners, massacring Branch

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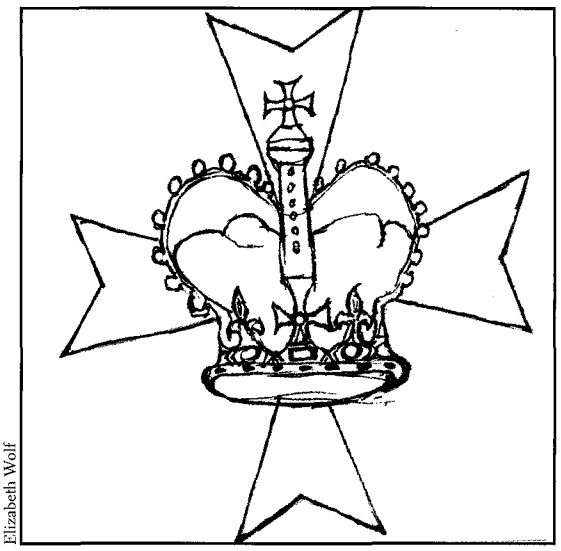

Elizabeth Wolf

Davidians, outlawing "hate speech," or bombing Belgrade.

Until his 76th year, no enemy could vanquish him. Many tried, including Gough Whitlam, who, when prime minister, dismissed Sir Joh as a "Bible-bashing bastard." Bland rube to the hilt, Sir Joh let his adversaries curse and shriek. Then, with imperturbable politeness, he would clean up their corpses. His entourage, known as the "White Shoe Brigade"—it included Rabelaisian property developers such as Michael Gore, once credited by an admirer (himself) with being "as slick as snot on a door handle"—lacked his own fortitude and personal austerity. Yet the White Shoe Brigade's crimes, examined and recounted in prurient detail by a governmental commission after Sir Joh left office, should hardly in themselves have scandalized even Jane Austen's maiden aunts. They were all pretty Runyonesque: a banknote-filled brown paper bag here; a rigged tender there. Sir Joh's gamier underlings observed, without knowing it, Gladstone's distinction between an aristocratic and a democratic leadership: The former bribes individuals, whereas the latter bribes whole classes. The White Shoe Brigade operated strictly at the individual level. To this extent, and this alone, it can be called aristocratic.

Sir Joh's reign ended dramatically in 1987, when his disgust at the ineptitude of federal right wingers—led (if "led" is not too violent a word) by the young John Howard—goaded him into running a third-party campaign for the prime ministry during that year's national election. Already Howard had perfected the talent which has served him so well ever since: being too weak and cynical to advocate genuine conservatism, but eminently strong enough to make sure that no rival can get away with advocating it either. The "Joh for P.M." drive failed, launching an entire literature of neocon mythology—which flourishes still—about how Sir Joh selfishly "split the conservatives" (*what* conservatives?). For the first time, he had overreached himself, and his own *quondam* party loyalists toppled him from the premiership before the year finished. Thereafter, except when he occasionally emerged to praise Pauline Hanson's movement before and during its late-1990's apex, he retired from public life as completely as any latter-day Emperor Charles V. No more did the airwaves resound to his much-mocked all-purpose slogan: "Don't you worry about that." No more did the airwaves resound to him at all. His innate dignity prevented him from whining. To the therapeutic state, he scorned to pay danegeld. (A less than appropriate metaphor, on reflection, since his father had come from Denmark.)

Canberra Times journalist Ian Warden (in a 1980 book of columns which boasts the title *Do Polar Bears Experience Religious Ecstasy?*) furnished as moderate a portrayal of Sir Joh as we may reasonably expect the Fourth Estate to give us. Shortly before the 1977 Queensland election, Warden met Sir Joh, the latter being on the campaign trail to aid a charming 82-year-old millionaire named Sir Bruce Small. ("Think big, vote Small," screamed Sir Bruce's fluorescent red-and-orange posters.) Expecting a flamboyant ogre, Warden found himself unexpectedly impressed by Sir Joh's plainness:

> I was struck [Warden wrote], not for the first time that day, by how dull, forgettable, and unobtrusive he becomes in a room full of others. Laurie [Sir Joh's police escort] had twice the presence and charisma of his charge. We are, I think, missing the point that he is a very, very ordinary man, albeit a man with extraordinary energies which enable him to express his ordinariness in political ways. . . . The more arts degrees you have and the longer you remain a perplexed agnostic, the harder it becomes to plumb the shallow depths of the man.

But "shallow depths" is unfair, a mere repetition of the same patronizing mistake that doomed so many of Sir Joh's antagonists. Rather, when we contemplate Sir Joh's long heyday and abrupt decline, let us recall Churchill's assessment of Lord Curzon's career: "The morning had been golden, the noontide was bronze, and the evening lead. But all were solid, and each was polished till it shone after its fashion."

R.J. Stove, who writes from Melbourne, Australia, is the author of The Unsleeping Eye: Secret Police and Their Victims.

Letter From Alabama

by J. Michael Hill

Whose Security?

◆

Several years ago, when the summer blockbuster *Independence Day* came out, I was told that audiences cheered the part where alien spacecraft destroyed such Washington, D.C., landmarks as the U.S. Capitol and the White House. At least some Americans know who the real enemy is and are willing to cheer publicly at cinematic depictions of their demise (at least in the dark of a theater), despite the threat of being labeled a "domestic terrorist."

The recent circus caused by the innocent mistake of a Cessna pilot violating the airspace of official Washington, along with one of Jorge Bush's many hypocritical utterances, made me realize just how wide the gulf is between the Official Ruling Class and the rest of us and why a healthy suspicion of the current regime and its motives is a good thing.

El Presidenté Bush, who never met a Mexican immigrant he didn't like, told the paranoid xenophobes in Red State Land who oppose his post-September 11, wide-open-borders policy that confident nations do not build fences to keep others out: Only fearful nations do that. Been near the White House lately? Talk about fences! But again, Jorge and his entourage are important people, and the normal rules do not apply to them. We don't need no stinking fences from Brownsville to San Diego to keep out Al Qaeda, as long as official Washington is bomb proofed. To hell with the yokels! Let them fend for themselves—just as long

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as they don't become gun-totin' vigilantes, like the Minutemen, in the process. Fill them with their daily ration of fear and instill in them dependence on government to "protect" them with the USA PATRIOT Act and such. But never mind the fact that government is really interested only in protecting its own.

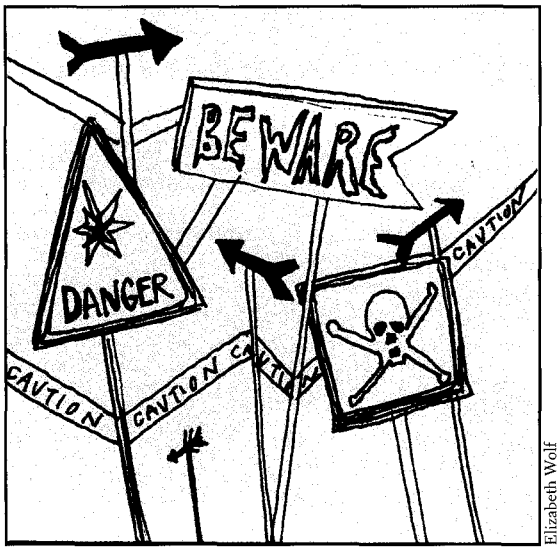
George Washington reminded his countrymen that the essence of government is force. To go a bit further, the handmaid of force is fear. Government normally thrives on making its subjects fear the consequences of disobedience. But the current government in D.C. wants you to see it as your benevolent and brave Big Brother who stands between you and Islamic terrorists; between you and a steady diet of Alpo in your old age; between you and your demise from asteroids striking Planet Earth. Just think of Jorge Bush in his flight suit on the deck of the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln*, proclaiming "Mission Accomplished," and you'll get the picture. And of course, government says that it is the only savior available in the post-Christian era to thwart these external threats. Thus, many Americans think that it is meet and right and their patriotic duty to let government take care of them.

But how much love and respect—not to mention fear—can a government generate in its subjects when it is the living embodiment of the Cowardly Lion?

When my wife and I turned on the Fox News Channel the day that the single-engine Cessna strayed into restricted D.C. airspace, we thought, at first, that something really big had happened. Then the announcer—with proper gravitas, of course—informed us of the developing situation. Not to put too fine a point on it, but we laughed out loud at the spectacle of grown men running panic-stricken from their temples of power because of a little Cessna. Hell, we have mosquitoes nearly that big in Alabama. Perhaps my wife and I could do with some sensitivity training by the airport-security Nazis. But think about this: The nerve center of the most powerful empire in the history of the world was rendered absolutely incontinent by little more than a toy airplane. As Liam Neeson proclaimed of the British in the movie *Michael Collins*, "How did these people ever come to run an empire?"

Though I always enjoy laughing at those people, I take no pleasure in the fact that this regime exists, in large part, because of the gullibility or mistaken self-interests of my Alabama neighbors. In fact, we might put much of the blame on Christian Southerners in general. One thing I learned about my fellow hillbillies, crackers, and rednecks when I was growing up in the 1950's and 1960's was that, though they may lack formal education, they did have plain old horse sense. And just a little bit of old-fashioned horse sense applied to the situation today should tell Southerners that they have been played for fools by Bush and his neocon buddies. How much longer will folks in Birmingham, Montgomery, Mobile, Huntsville, and Tuscaloosa cheerfully and patriotically send their boys off to die in prolonged wars for "democracy" and "national security" in the faraway deserts of Iraq and Afghanistan (and God only knows where else) while our border remains open to anyone who wishes to cross it? How much longer will they tolerate the unconstitutional lockdown of their society under the ministry of Homeland Security? How much longer will my good people allow themselves to be fooled into thinking that their own interests and security concerns are the same as those of the Ruling Class? A shutdown of Washington, D.C., for whatever reason, would mean more freedom for the rest of us. Humorist Will Rogers understood that when he proclaimed that we are never so secure as when Congress is out of session.

The only security at stake here is the security of the Ruling Class that has destroyed our republic and lied about it. Frankly, they don't give a damn about common folks like you and me. We are just cannon fodder, taxpayers, and consumers. We are interchangeable and expendable. People serious about preserving their freedom would not hesitate to call them traitors and then take the appropriate action to be rid of them. But to prevent us from seeing the truth of their treason, they must keep us in constant fear of everything under the sun but themselves. *Their* constant fear is that we will finally awaken and see just how insecure and fearful they have become. Once that happens, the bloom is off the rose.



Elizabeth Wolf

More and more of my fellow Alabamians (and all Southerners and other Americans) are, I pray, beginning to notice that the emperor is "nekkid." The Cessna incident and the barricading of official Washington should, if nothing else, demonstrate that our imperial rulers take their own security seriously. It also demonstrates that, if you say "Boo," they will jump like terrified children. At the very least, it is fun to watch.

J. Michael Hill is president of the League of the South.

"FREE" ADVICE FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES*

"I've been happily married for 21 years. Ten years ago, my husband suffered a debilitating disease that keeps us from making love. Four years ago, I bumped into an ex-lover, himself married, and began a sexual relationship, reawakening my sexual feelings. Neither of us would ever divorce. I'm sure I can keep this relationship secret, so my husband will not get hurt. My devout Catholicism forbids such an affair, but does secular ethics?

—Anonymous . . .

"If your sex life with your husband has indeed ended, you may honorably consider other alternatives. A fulfilling erotic life is an important part of marriage, indeed of human happiness. Many religions enumerate conjugal duties. . . .

"There remains the conflict between this path and your religion's strictures, but that is something millions of Catholics face each time they employ contraception, for example. Few practitioners of any faith adhere to each of its dictates."

—from "Fair Affair?" by Randy Cohen, "The Ethicist" (July 31)

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by Srdja Trifkovic

European Disunion

In early 1980, the Soviet Union appeared to be more powerful than ever before. Its hold over Eastern Europe had been sealed in Helsinki five years previously. Its presence or influence in the Third World was rising, while that of the United States was diminishing. The notion of its eventual demise was dear to a few diehard Cold Warriors, but even they viewed it as a possibility distant in time and fraught with nuclear dangers. Within a few years, however, the war in Afghanistan, the challenge of Ronald Reagan, the unrest in Poland, and the inability of the Kremlin gerontocracy to find a viable successor to Brezhnev revealed many structural weaknesses of the empire of "real socialism." Gorbachev's ineptitude helped turn the crisis of the system into the crisis of the state. By 1991, the Soviet Union was dead and gone.

It is too early to tell whether the rejection of the proposed European Union constitution by the voters of France (May 29) and the Netherlands (June 1) heralds the beginning of a similar downward slide in Brussels, but the parallel appears apt. Only a year ago, in the aftermath of its expansion to 25 member countries, the European Union appeared poised to become a superstate of some half-billion people. The euro was strong, while Euroskepticism appeared weak and confined to the union's British fringe. A team of dedicated federalists had completed drafting its constitution, a document Jacobin in sentiment and in style: radical, secularist, progressivist, militantly humanist, and anti-Christian. A few commentators—myself included—warned that the edifice based in Brussels was fundamentally flawed because it was artificial and lacked the consent of the governed, but nobody could foresee that the unsoundness would become apparent so soon.

Today, the European Union is in crisis, and that crisis has three key aspects. The rejection of the constitution has marked a decisive defeat for the proponents of a single European superstate. The European Union's latent budget crisis—not resolved at a rancorous summit in Brussels last June—is becoming acute. More important yet is the dispute over whether the European Union should reinvent itself as a dynamic, competitive common market in order to succeed in the global economy.

The fact that Great Britain assumed the presidency of the European Union on July 1 has great significance on all three issues, especially on the last one. Under Britain's presidency, we shall see the ideological clash between the spirit of the "Old Europe" epitomized by France and Germany, which seek to uphold the 1960's dirigiste "social model," and the demand for a leaner, meaner, more flexible Europe. Prime Minister Tony Blair believes that the "reality check" initiated by the defeat of the constitution will help him prevail. The British presidency will be marked by the demand for reduced interference from Brussels and the insistence that increased competitiveness is the only way for the Old Continent to avoid being left behind in the global economy.

The pretense that the old show can be kept on the road was maintained somewhat uneasily by the federalists, who pledged to press ahead with the planned ratification process. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and President Jacques Chirac said they "were in agreement that the constitutional process must continue so that the views of each country are respected." Carl Bildt, former prime minister of Sweden, declared that the lesson of the referendum was not that enlargement should be abandoned but that it should be anchored in a more open debate:

> We cannot go further and faster than the citizens of Europe are prepared to tolerate—but we should recognize the fundamental difference in a capitulation to populism. It is leadership that is called for if abandonment of the soft power of Europe and a slide into instability are to be avoided.

Such hot air and desperate bombast notwithstanding, the proposed E.U. Constitution Treaty is dead. The implicit hope that Messrs. Bildt, Schröder, Chirac, and their ilk entertain—that the referendum in those two founding-member states can be repeated, and a different result obtained—reflects the arrogance and contempt for democracy of the Euro-federalist elite class. That class refused to accept Denmark's rejection of the Maastricht Treaty *via* referendum in 1992 and repeated it the following year, when the "yes" vote prevailed thanks to an unprecedented media blitz by the proponents of the closer union. In 1991, the voters in Ireland caused another upset by rejecting the Nice Treaty in a referendum. This caused dismay in Brussels, but the Irish were also induced to reverse that decision a year later, in a virtual replay of the Danish scenario.

Admittedly, the motives of many French and Dutch "no" voters had little to do with the nature of the superstate project. Many of them simply wanted to punish unpopular governments for lackluster economic performance; others feared the winds of change *per se*, and, in France, the left accused the proponents of the E.U. constitution of seeking to dismantle the welfare state and undermine job security. But the rejection of further integration was nevertheless central to the voters' decision. It was a bitter blow to the credibility and legitimacy of arguably the most ambitious political project the world has yet witnessed, and especially to the French governing elite, who had been both the architects and builders of the European Union ever since Jean Monnet conceived it over half a century ago. The "yes" camp could not mount a credible countercampaign, based on the argument that "Europe" should not be punished for the domestic shortcomings of President Chirac or Prime Minister Balkenende. For the first time ever, two of the original six members have rejected a major European treaty.

In the Netherlands, the issues of sovereignty, identity, and immigration were openly raised in the referendum debate,

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and the genie so loathsome to the European elite class is now out of the bottle. In what is arguably Europe's most "tolerant" country, the notion that a nation with shared blood and history has the right to her land and customs has become a legitimate mainstream argument. Perhaps Theo van Gogh did not die in vain.

On the economic front, the outcome in France and Holland will have beneficial effects, too. The dirigiste Franco-German consensus will now retreat before a more vigorous competitive spirit favored by Britain and supported by Finland, Ireland, and a few new members in Eastern Europe. If the CDU's Angela Merkel unseats Chancellor Schröder at the forthcoming general election in Germany, as seems likely, Germany will join them by introducing much needed tax and labor-law reforms. More important still, the eastern end of the old Paris-Berlin axis will disappear. That would pave the way for the center-right reformer Nicolas Sarkozy, Chirac's archrival, to bring a breath of fresh air into the Elysee Palace in 2007.

The proponents of E.U. reform have a rare opportunity to use the moment of weakness and dismay in Paris and Berlin to induce long overdue change. The advocates of the old "social model" have neither a plan nor a strategy to resist Blair's intention to reduce Brussels to the role of a bursar serving the states. His advocacy of an essentially liberal-capitalist model indicates just how far his "New Labour" has moved from its socialist roots. He is now hoping for the defeat of Herr Schröder, as a CDU-CSU government would likely support his agenda. Germany's conservatives are not Euro-skeptics, but they favor reform. Berlin's *Die Welt* reflected their position when it warned that the European Union is in turmoil because a pragmatic economic community has turned into an opaque and complex edifice:

> The solution will not be to pursue more and more integration policies. On [the] contrary, Europe consists of functioning states, which are interested in the rule of law, peace, trade and growth. Why should they be dissolved into an overstretched structure? . . . Europe's goal must be a free trade area of sovereign states, not a completely harmonized giant region.

This view is light years away from the federalist rhetoric that had prevailed in Brussels, Paris, and Berlin until a few months ago. It is echoed all over Europe. Continental editorialists and analysts now urge Tony Blair to seize the opportunity to offer a clear prospect to Europeans on what interests them the most: employment, the economy, organized crime, and immigration.

Blair would be well advised to go even further. In a fine analysis in the London *Times* (June 30), Anatole Kaletsky insisted that Blair should do something unthinkable to Europe's political classes but blindingly obvious to voters: demand the return of powers to national governments from Brussels.

> In diplomatic jargon, he must start to unravel the acquis communautaire. The acquis is a convention that asserts that any responsibility transferred to Brussels can never be renationalised. It guarantees an irreversible accretion of power to the EU. Mr Blair should, as a matter of principle, announce his opposition to this anti-democratic juggernaut. He should show what he means in practice by proposing repatriation of specific policies, starting with issues such as regulations on working time and consumer protection, but aiming eventually for the biggest and most expensive policy—agriculture.

He should also emphasize the diversity of Europe, Kaletsky insists, by rejecting the concept of a single economic model to be followed by every E.U. country, because Europe is not a single economy. It is a single market, a community of democratic nations, whose citizens choose different economic and social priorities. It needs national policies based on each member's independence, reinforced by competition and an awareness of what works or fails in other countries. Britain cannot force France to adopt the competitive model, but she can offer an effective example of privatization and financial reform. Her shaky National Health Service and declining railways, in turn, would be well advised to check out the French model. Europe should be based on an implicit unity in practical diversity, with each country free to maintain her social traditions.

There is no rational reason why the European Union has to proceed on the road of ever-tighter political and social integration. There is even less reason for the European Union to seek a "global" role akin to that currently played by the United States; our imperial endeavor is meaningless, costly, and ultimately self-defeating. "Europe" should halt. The process of integration has removed internal barriers to the movement of goods, services, capital, and people, and it has rendered violent conflict among its members well-nigh unimaginable. That is enough, not only for now but for years to come. Further integration would be detrimental to the diversity essential to the preservation of spontaneously willing unity. Further enlargement should be put on hold. And, even if it is eventually resumed, it has to exclude Turkey.

If the federalist spirit prevails—and it is certain that the proponents of the superstate will not give up easily—we must hope that the European Union will share the fate of the Soviet Union. The concepts of "an ever-tighter Union" and "the Socialist Community" share similar roots and produce similar fruits. The *Weltanschauung* of Brussels, like that of the Kremlin under Lenin and his heirs, denies any divine intent in history and rejects man's duty to conform to immutable laws of morality. Both ignore the value of order, stability, and tradition—the method of nature—as the foundation of any good government. Both proudly fail to recognize any limits to man's reason. Both are guilty of pushing the Old Continent along the path of moral, spiritual, and demographic self-liquidation.

Europe's survival is in doubt, and its revival is possible only if its historic nations reassert their identity and rediscover their Faith. The defeated E.U. constitution would have made both those goals unattainable. Its consignment to the dust heap of history is a relief to all true Europeans and a rare piece of genuinely good news to their American cousins.

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THE COURTS

Crying "Halt!"

by Stephen B. Presser

A federal judge whom I know lamented that the Supreme Court term that ended last June was the worst in recent memory. That judge loves the Constitution but could find few signs that this term's key decisions were based on that document. A Court that can rule that medical marijuana grown for home use substantially effects interstate commerce; that states and localities may take for a "public purpose" the land of A to give to another private party, B, who will generate more tax revenues; and that it is permissible to display the Ten Commandments on public property when they have been there for 50 years but not when they have recently been installed is engaged in some very bizarre jurisprudence.

Still, there were some salutary developments. The Supreme Court trashed the federal government's wrongful prosecution of the once-venerable Arthur Andersen accounting firm. (It was a Pyrrhic victory, however, since Andersen's thousands of employees have gone on to other places, and the company could not be resurrected.) The Court did also, in a sense, protect private property when it held that peer-to-peer file-sharing operations such as Grokster could be held responsible for their users' breaches of copyright and when it ruled that cable operators could not be forced to allow competitors access to their lines. Neither of those were predictably popular decisions—the first, because it must have disappointed millions who had been downloading music for free, and the second, because it will allow the few giant cable firms to continue something close to monopoly pricing. Still, both of those decisions were at least principled and, in a sense, courageous. And the Court pleased us oenophiles when it ruled that a state may not bar internet wine sales from out-of-state wineries if it permits them for in-state wine producers.

One could also discern that the Court was playing both sides against the middle, as it did most prominently in the two Ten Commandments cases. Advocates of separation of Church and state were delighted by the ruling that recent attempts to have the Ten Commandments placed in Kentucky courthouses were impermissible; members of the Moral Majority were pleased when the Court decided that the monument to the Ten Commandments on the grounds of the Texas state capitol could stay. Property-rights advocates should have been happy with the file-sharing and cable cases, if appalled by the "public purpose" eminent-domain case. Advocates of increasing the power of states and localities might have been pleased by the eminent-domain case but concerned about the wine one.

It is risky to impute a collective mind to a Supreme Court that has for so long consisted of shifting five-person majorities (the usual shifters were Justices Anthony Kennedy and Sandra Day O'Connor, but, in the Ten Commandments cases, the elusive justice was Stephen Breyer), but at least the swing justices may believe that it is important to create a sense of moderation, in order to discourage criticism of the Court, in general, or to keep from giving the Republicans a strong political issue, in particular. If the Court had, for example, completely neglected property rights or thrown out all Ten Commandments displays on public property, President Bush, like President Roosevelt before him, would have been able to claim it necessary to save the Constitution from the Court and the Court from itself.

If that was the strategy—to remove the Court from politics and to get another "moderate" on the bench—one can only hope that it fails and that President Bush, in appointing John Roberts, did not heed the siren song currently being sung by the Democrats in the Senate that, because the retiring Justice O'Connor was a "moderate," she must be replaced by another "moderate" in order to maintain "balance." That is, of course, code for the proposition that, since O'Connor voted not to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*, the President must appoint a like-minded jurist, else the Democrats will be able to reject the nominee as an "extremist." In judicial selection, as in most American politics, the "moderates" are simply those you agree with; the "extremists," those you don't.

If what this Court has been engaging in is moderation, moderation is not what it was when I was young, because, whatever decisions the Court may have rendered this term, the primary casualties, as usual, were the rule of law and popular sovereignty. Instead of exercising moderation, the Court underscored how arbitrary it can be; how infrequently constitutional law dictates the result in politically important cases, such as those involving religion, race, abortion, and private property; and how important it is that President Bush fulfill his campaign pledge to appoint judges similar to Associate Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas. Those two, the President said during both of his campaigns, understand that it is not the job of judges to legislate and that the Constitution should only be interpreted according to its original understanding. Any other interpretive strategy makes the judges lawmakers, which is a betrayal of their role, limned in *Federalist* 78, as the agents of the people.

Very possibly, the Supreme Court (or the slippery justices) may have outsmarted themselves, because their hopelessly inconsistent and, in some cases, plainly wrong decisions only clarify the need for a serious course correction. One or two more "moderate" appointments like Kennedy, O'Connor, or Breyer, and we can kiss the chance of the kind of jurisprudence ostensibly embraced by the President goodbye—at least for the next few decades.

Of all the significant cases decided by the Court this term, the "takings" case, *Kelo* v. *New London*, was the most shocking. In it, the Court held that New London could take Susette Kelo's home (presumably providing "just compensation," although valuing property, particularly in the context of governmental expropriation, is a chancy business) in order to allow private development of the property, which would generate more tax revenues for New London. The Fifth Amendment does permit governmental taking—with just compensation—of private property, but only "for public use." Until *Kelo*, "public use" had usually been thought to mean purely governmental undertakings, such as highways, official buildings, or perhaps public-housing projects. In *Kelo*, however, the Court appeared to permit any state or locality to take private prop-

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erty and convert it to any use that, in the wisdom of governmental officials, would provide a public benefit, such as greater tax revenues or greater economic development. This means that no one's property can now be regarded as safe from rapacious and well-connected developers and their official allies. As the dissenting Justice O'Connor (in one of her best opinions in years) put it, the Court has "effectively . . . delete[d] the words 'for public use' from the Takings Clause of the 5th Amendment" and thereby

> refus[ed] to enforce properly the federal Constitution. . . . Nothing is to prevent the state from replacing any Motel 6 with a Ritz-Carlton, any home with a shopping mall, or any farm with a factory.

In *Kelo*, then, as O'Connor suggests, the Supreme Court rewrote the Fifth Amendment. The majority in *Kelo* did leave open the possibility, however, that the people of the states (or localities) could amend their constitutions or laws to ensure that, in their particular jurisdictions, "public use" would be narrowly construed, so that the threat to private property could be mitigated by citizen action. Indeed, Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and others quickly filed bills in Congress that, if passed and signed, would "declare Congress's view that the power of eminent domain should . . . not be used to further private economic development" but only for true "public uses." This would not exactly overrule *Kelo*, but it might restrict "1) all exercises of eminent domain power by the federal government, and 2) by state and local government through the use of federal funds," as Senator Cornyn explained. Similar efforts are under way in several states.

The cure for an errant Supreme Court is for citizens to remember that "We the People" are the sovereigns in our Republic and that we can, at any time, recapture the Constitution. A shortcut to doing that is to appoint better jurists to the U.S. Supreme Court; sometimes that shortcut is unavailable, however, and the longer and more difficult paths of state and federal legislation, or even of constitutional amendment—spurred on by citizen action—must be employed. The Supreme Court (as one of the greatest judges never to sit on that Court, Learned Hand, explained) should not be permitted to become Nine Platonic Guardians, with the discretion to remake the law or the Constitution at will. This is precisely what has been allowed to happen for too long, and the American President and people should put a stop to it.

Stephen B. Presser is the Raoul Berger Professor of Legal History at Northwestern University.

EDUCATION

You Can't Always Get What You Want

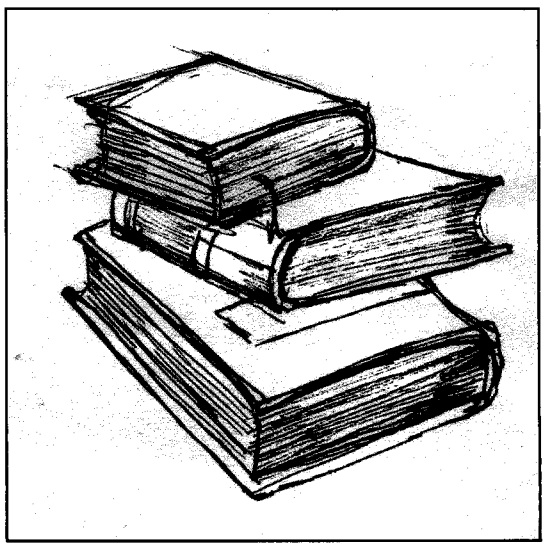
by Nicole Kooistra

My meeting with the college dean was a disillusioning experience. I had figured that it would take about ten minutes to fill out the required paperwork to transfer from this private college to a state university, but, when I emerged a half-hour later, I realized how naive I had been about higher education. I had only expected to go through the formalities, but the dean forced me to explain my decision in full. I told him that my classes had been unsatisfying and the books I was studying, insignificant. He told me I was making a mistake, that I would be lost amidst the chaos of a public university. His manner, more than his words, shook me: He spent the whole time sighing, and by his look he seemed to think that I would soon be a college dropout. I returned to my dorm room in tears. I had come to realize that I would not get an education where I was, and the dean had insisted I would not find one where I was going. Unfortunately, we were both correct, at least in part. American colleges are not educational institutions.

I did not learn this lesson from books but from experience. As a student who has attended three different colleges, I have learned not to put my faith in the institution of the university. Of course, I was reared to be skeptical. After sending me to a private school for kindergarten and first grade, my mother decided that she could teach me better at home. I remained at home through my high-school years, attending community college for the classes that were difficult for her or simply impractical in the home environment (chemistry, for example). After I graduated, I enrolled at a private liberal-arts college, where I stayed for one year before transferring to the large public university I now attend. Why did I exchange an elite school for a workaday state university? My reasoning was that, if I was going to receive the same education at both, I should choose the one that would cost my parents less.

My first class as a college student proved to be typical of my college experience. A mandatory course for freshmen, it was intended to introduce us to a wide range of disciplines, yet the focus was on all that is non-Western and irrelevant. The one classic work we read was Plato's *Republic*; the rest of the term took up everything from the poetry of Bedouin women to Chinese philosophy. That is what I get for going to a *liberal*-arts college, but, at the state university, I took an American-novels class that included Hannah Foster, Kate Chopin, and Toni Morrison but had no room for Mark Twain or Ernest Hemingway. Ultimately, the text hardly matters, since professors are content to ignore both author and historical context while constructing their own interpretations. My American literature professor spent more time on race and homosexuality in *Moby Dick* than on any other aspect of the story.

Deconstructionism is only a symptom of a disease that goes deeper. Universities have rejected their original purpose, which was to train the mind and better the soul through the study of the classics; now, the announced goal is to make the student employable. The degree becomes the end instead of the education behind it—and who cares about literature? This affects all students to some degree, but especially men, who, for the most part, envision themselves providing



Elizabeth Wolf

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for families several years down the road. Almost all of my male friends are business majors.

The most disturbing aspect of the university is the savage hostility of professors and administrators toward Christianity. I have had several agnostic professors and one bitter atheist but not one who is known as a believer. I once had to meet with a professor to discuss my use of a biblical quotation in a paper arguing the commonalities between a passage from Dostoyevsky's *Notes From Underground* and a passage from Scripture. Despite the fact that Dostoyevsky was a Christian and that I was using the Bible as a literary source, my professor only allowed me to use the quotation, with great displeasure, after two meetings. My fellow students were tolerant of the Faith; many come from somewhat Christian backgrounds. It is the professors, the very people whom students are supposed to respect and trust, who mock our beliefs and blaspheme the Truth we were brought up to believe. It is not that academics are active atheists. They believe in dialectical materialism, mother goddesses, Nature, *etc.* As G.K. Chesterton wrote in *Orthodoxy*, "When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing—they believe in anything."

Depressing as they are, universities have their uses. While I have learned not to put my faith in the university, I do endeavor to take advantage of the opportunities it has to offer. A university library contains more volumes on more subjects than I will ever have the time to study. College is one of the few periods of life in which I will have such a vast quantity of information quite literally at my fingertips. Professors can also be a resource, though, as with books, it takes some effort to separate the wheat from the chaff. A way to use your professors' knowledge is to watch for those classes that reflect their areas of expertise. (One of the best courses I have taken thus far was "Restoration and 17th-Century Literature," taught by a man who had edited a volume of Dryden.) You will still get atheism and deconstructionism, but they will be mixed with a greater proportion of good information and teaching.

In those cases where the material is bad and the professor has an agenda, a better understanding of arguments with which you disagree may be the only thing to take from the class. I have learned much about feminism from feminist professors. If nothing else, you can discover what teaching methods do and do not work. I once had an education professor who tried to be his students' friend, and, by the end of the term, he had lost the respect of every one of us. I did not come to school to study feminism and poor teaching techniques, but at least I took something out of those classes.

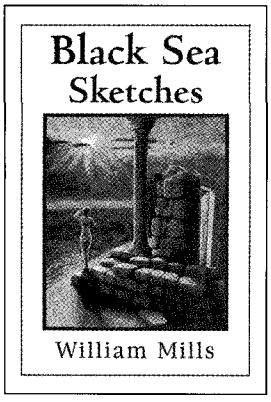
The university, properly understood, is only the springboard for personal education; it is a somewhat perverse application of the old Gospel tune "Brighten the Corner Where You Are." Since American universities are in a deplorable state, we must learn to educate ourselves. Perhaps that is the most valuable lesson the professoriate has to teach. An education is not something you can buy, even on the installment plan of college loans. It is a lifelong personal commitment. My mother took the time to begin my education, and I hope some day to do the same for my own children. It is the least I can do. Consider it long-term homeschooling.

Nicole Kooistra is studying English literature at Northern Illinois University and is the assistant to the president of The Rockford Institute.

Black Sea Sketches

BLACK SEA SKETCHES is a travel book written for serious travelers, including armchair travelers. Although the author may take an occasional swim or walk the beaches, the book is much more about the history and prehistory, the culture and the contemporary scene than about recreational opportunities. It is the kind of book you would want to read before or during your own travel in these fascinating countries.

The five countries—Ukraine, Rumania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Georgia—often share military and economic history, but cultural contrasts abound: different alphabets and languages, different religions. While most of Ukraine, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Georgia embrace the Orthodox faith, Turkey is largely Muslim, as is part of the Crimean population. All five of the countries reflect, especially architecturally, the common past of ancient Greece and, most of them, of the later Genoan commercial empire.



Rising above the glittering monuments of the past, however, are the people Mills met and the stories of their lives, often of great courage under pressure and of generosity to a stranger and a traveler.

Comments about other works of William Mills

"William Mills' stories draw the reader deeply into the hearts and minds of men and women to reveal the essential nature of Man in a world governed by forces so primal there is no resisting their call, no mitigation of their judgment."

—Gordon Weaver

"Seldom have I found a contemporary poet so intensely and humanly convincing. Mills' voice is very near the fraternal and memorable sounds we all want to make, and say."

—James Dickey

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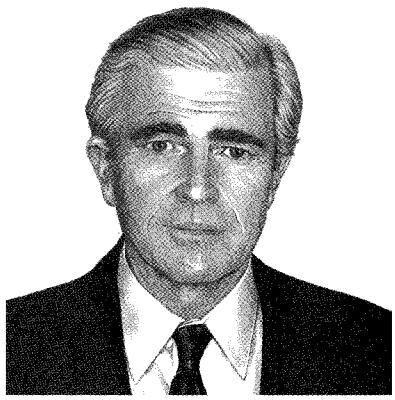
by George McCartney

Preternatural Selection



War of the Worlds

Produced and distributed by Paramount Pictures and DreamWorks
Directed by Steven Spielberg
Screenplay by David Koepp and Josh Friedman

Holy oxymoron! Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* is a thoughtful summer blockbuster. While it serves up the obligatory thrills of the school's-out-let-it-rip subgenre, it also pays surprisingly scrupulous homage to its source, H.G. Wells' novel. There are changes, to be sure. Instead of landing in late-19th-century Woking, England, Wells' alien invaders now descend upon post-September-11 Bayonne, New Jersey, riding lightning bolts into the urban tarmac, no less. In a disquieting allusion to the tactics of *jihad* sleeper cells, they plummet underground to the weapon caches they have buried long ago in preparation for their apocalyptic assault. By the way, the New Jersey location is surely a nod to Orson Welles' infamous 1938 radio adaptation of Wells' novel, in which Bayonne figures as one of the staging areas for the earthlings' feeble response to the invading Martians. Given what we know about the relative lifelessness of Mars today, Spielberg says nothing of his aliens' planetary origins. As in the novel, however, he depicts them sitting in cowl-shaped control cabins atop 100-foot-high walking tripods from which they blast ululating bass notes to one another as they stride across the countryside. Just as Wells had imagined, Spielberg's aliens come equipped with mechanical tentacles that scoop up fleeing humans and deposit them in metal harvest baskets. Wells' aliens were vampires, you see, and had to store a ready supply of blood hosts for their sustenance. Without being disgustingly graphic about it, Spielberg visually implies the same thing. He has even included the kudzu-like red vine brought by the novel's invaders and shows it branching over the landscape with arterial tenacity.

Spielberg has not restricted himself to the novel's physical details. He has followed Wells' habit of using the fantastic to comment on the actual.

Wells was never more earnest than when writing what we now call science fiction. His scientific romances, as he called them, always conveyed implicit warnings to his species. *War of the Worlds* is no exception. In a bid to be taken seriously, the novel's nameless narrator flaunts his credentials. "My particular province is speculative philosophy," he assures us. This and the fact that he lives in Woking, 25 miles southwest of London, where Wells wrote the novel in 1896, make it a fair bet that he speaks for his creator when he addresses such issues as imperialism, class struggle, human arrogance, and evolutionary development. In short, the novel is a parable. Wells' Martians have come rudely to awaken human beings, Brits in particular, from their cosmically insular sleep. The narrator never tires of drawing parallels between Martian treatment of humans and the English habit of bullying wogs around the world. To rub his readers' noses in their imperial arrogance, he gives them a taste of what it is like to be at the mercy of those who wield superior technology. The Brits have no means of resisting the advance of the Martians. The hardihood cultivated on the playing fields of Eaton hasn't a chance against the invaders' "heat ray" and poison gas. As for Divine Intervention, It seems to have taken a holiday. There is, however, a Darwinian hope. Across the millennia, the limeys have developed a resistance to earth's bacteria that the Martians lack. "These germs of disease," the narrator helpfully explains, "have taken a toll of humanity since the beginning of things—taken toll of our prehuman ancestors since life began here. But by virtue of this natural selection of our kind we have developed resisting power." And so Wells' Martians are "slain, after all man's devices had failed, by the humblest thing that God, in his wisdom, had put on this earth." That Wells ascribed this evolutionary defense to God's wisdom may seem odd, at first. He was, after all, a committed atheist. But we must remember that atheists of his time could still harbor—however illogically—hankerings for a universe that exhibits rational design, a sort of mournful after-echo of the defunct belief in a Creator.

Of course, in our more advanced age, such metaphysical fudging will not do. This was demonstrated just last month when Christoph Schönborn, cardinal-archbishop of Vienna, had the temerity to publish an editorial in the *New York Times* clarifying the Church's stand on evolution. Arguing that the theory of evolution broadly understood is compatible with the Faith, the cardinal flatly rejected its neo-Darwinian version because it insists that life is solely the product of "an unguided, unplanned process of random variation and natural selection." It is the Church's duty, he asserted, to defend human reason against theories that attempt to "explain away the appearance of design as the result of 'chance and necessity,'" for they are "not scientific at all, but, as John Paul put it, an abdication of human intelligence." Two days later, the inevitable response appeared in the *Times* replete with statements from concerned scientists, all of whom oddly enough raised the same warning: The Church must not interfere in their discipline. This is not, however, what Cardinal Schönborn had done. He merely called attention to the irrational position of some neo-Darwinians, philosophically speaking. Of course, there is a larger issue at stake in the background, and I am sure the cardinal wanted us to reflect on it. If we acquiesce to the argument that purposeful creation is an inadmissible hypothesis, we are so much farther down the road to installing ourselves as the sole arbiters of design in matters of life and death, an incredibly dangerous stance to adopt in the age of genetic engineering. What Wells would have thought of all this is anyone's guess, but I like to think this friend of G.K. Chesterton was himself wise enough to understand the risky

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implications of blind faith in an entirely random universe.

The issue of natural selection's design plays a major role in Spielberg's film. His opening shot is an extreme close-up of paramecia lazily wriggling about in some lab solution as Morgan Freeman—who else?—intones a slightly updated version of Wells' chilly introduction to his narrative.

> No one would have believed in the last years of the twentieth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's; . . . that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter.

This sets up everything that follows: The paramecia suggest human helplessness under the gaze of an evolutionarily superior species while, at the same time, they forecast the possibility of a *bacterium ex machina*. It is also cinematic shorthand, saying that we have all been down this path before, so let's dispense with lengthy expositions and cut to the chase. Before the chase begins, however, Spielberg injects a piece of foreshadowing that could itself serve as yet another argument for God's existence sheerly on the basis of its all-too-evident design. Child star Dakota Fanning explains to her dimwit father Tom Cruise that he need not worry about the splinter in her finger. "When my body's ready, it'll just push it out." Say no more.

What is most successful about this captivating film is the economy with which Spielberg has woven his themes into its hurtling action. In the opening scene, we meet Ray Ferrier (Cruise in *Top Gun* mode) sitting 30 feet aloft in the cab of the crane he is operating on a Bayonne pier. He smiles smugly, the lord of all he surveys, as he works the crane's control levers to lift a box car into the hold of a container ship. A few scenes later, this image is reprised by the gigantic alien tripods dropping tentacle-like cables from their control cowls to snatch human beings from the ground. They are a nightmare version of Ray's ruthlessness toward others, including his own children.

Ray is an American boy-man whose wife has dumped him because of his reckless self-absorption. He has never bothered to know his children, played by ten-year-old Fanning and an adolescent Justin Chatwin. Both look upon him with a barely suppressed mixture of fear and contempt. When their mother leaves them in his care for the weekend, they know they are at his mercy. When we learn that his son has to write a paper on the French occupation of Algeria for his political-science course, we realize that Spielberg, like Wells before him, is using his fiction to elucidate the darker nature of human relations in both the personal and political realms. So, when the aliens begin their attack, we are not surprised to hear Ray's daughter ask, "Is it the terrorists?" Yes, it is, but it's not only jihadists; in this post-September-11 film, it's also us. The aliens toppling the Bayonne Bridge may remind us of the downing of the Twin Towers, but, as their attack proceeds with an onslaught of overwhelming firepower, we cannot help but recall images of America's 2003 "shock and awe" campaign on Iraqi citizens. Given the appropriate circumstances, we can all be seduced by the temptation to exercise brutal power over others.

Once the film establishes its premise of parallels, the narrative goes into overdrive. Ray struggles hectically to save his children from the aliens and thereby gets a chance to grow up and learn how to be a father. What I particularly liked was Spielberg's decision to stay with the Ferrier family through the ensuing devastation. The alien attack comes at us in bewildering fragments, just as ordinary citizens have always experienced the horrors wreaked by human wars. Ray never grasps the whole situation. He becomes lost in a crowd of frightened, demoralized refugees fleeing across the battered New England landscape, desperately trying to reach his ex-wife in Boston. At one point, he stands with his children at a railroad crossing with hundreds of others all desperate to escape the alien kill zone. They hear a train approaching. The crossing gates descend and a flicker of hope appears in their faces. The train does not stop, however. As it whizzes by, the crowd is struck dumb. Every car is being consumed by fire. It is a surreal rendering of hopelessness in a world gone mad. Thereafter, Ray finds he can barely hold on to his kids. Panicked crowds jostle and threaten the family from every side. At one point, he quarrels with his son. The boy wants to join a passing army unit and fight the invaders. As Ray tries to stop him, he nearly loses track of his daughter. Meanwhile, off to the side, the soldiers are making a valiant but futile attack on the aliens, with muffled blasts going off just out of sight. The sense of confusion and unpredictable cross-purposes could not be more palpable. It is both the bedlam and the valor of battle that have madly punctuated human history from its beginnings.

Spielberg wisely eschews one of the key conventions of this kind of film. The authorities never show up to explain what is happening. Instead, we stay with the family caught up in the booming, buzzing confusion of the all-encompassing chaos around them. This focus allows Spielberg to intensify what has been his central theme since *Jaws* (1975): how parents save or fail their children in moments of intolerable crisis. Through a terrifying process that seems like radically foreshortened natural selection, Ray the bankrupt father gets the opportunity to evolve into a paternal savior. The film's immediate suspense lies, of course, in the question of Ray's success or failure. But the question that lingers after the theater lights come up is this: Did accident or design determine this family's fate? ◁

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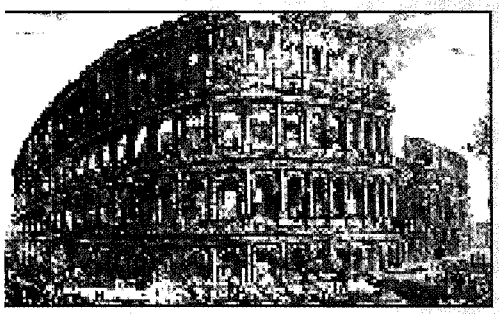

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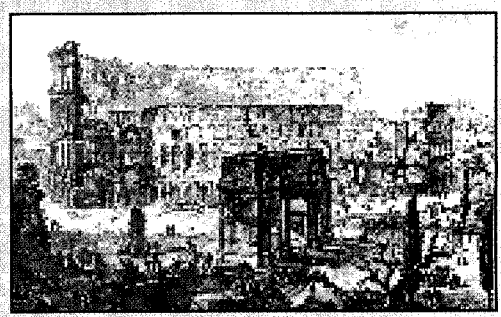

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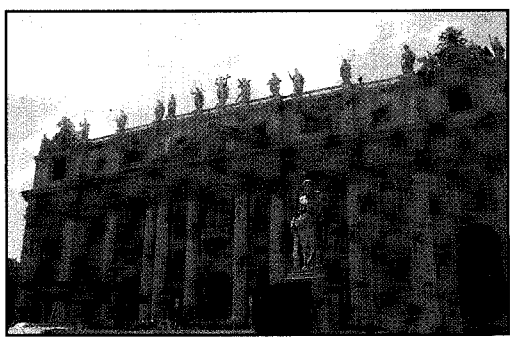

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